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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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The charismatic racer tackles the Motorsport News posers, *starts p20*

Max triumphs amid huge controversy in Abu Dhabi

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World RX glory for Kristoffersson after a nip-and-tuck year *p16*

REVIEW

OGIER FLIES TO HIS FINAL WRC CROWN

How the Frenchman took the glory in last full season *p28*

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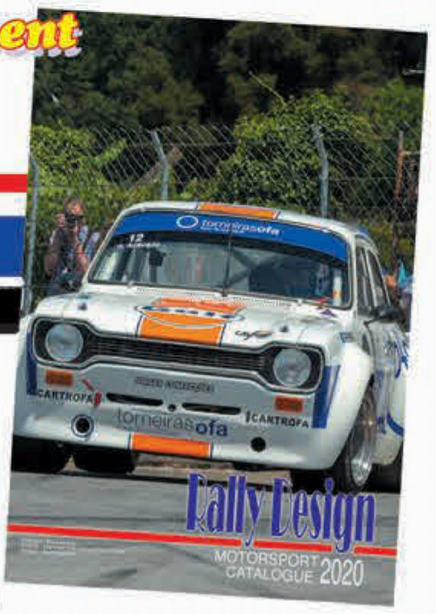

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HELICAL LSDs, BLACKLINE

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Wilwood brakes kits from £299.51 £359.41

ESCORT BRAKING PARTS

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8x15	£99.00	£118.80

Classic Ford wheels from £69.00 £82.80

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X-Flow ally radiator	£179.60	£215.52
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Kit £159.80 £191.76

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Escort Mk2 front screen rubber	£29.08	£34.90
Escort Mk2 rear screen rubber	£29.08	£34.90
Laser windscreen chip repair kit	£13.90	£16.68
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Throttle pedal pad		£5.20	£6.24
Brake and clutch pedal pads	pair	£8.00	£9.60
Shock absorber top caps	pair	£13.90	£16.68
Rear bumper side plugs, set of 4		£9.90	£11.88
Oil line bulkhead grommet		£5.10	£6.12
Brake servo rod bellows		£5.20	£6.24

PLEASE NOTE: All prices in Red are EXCLUSIVE OF VAT

COMMENT

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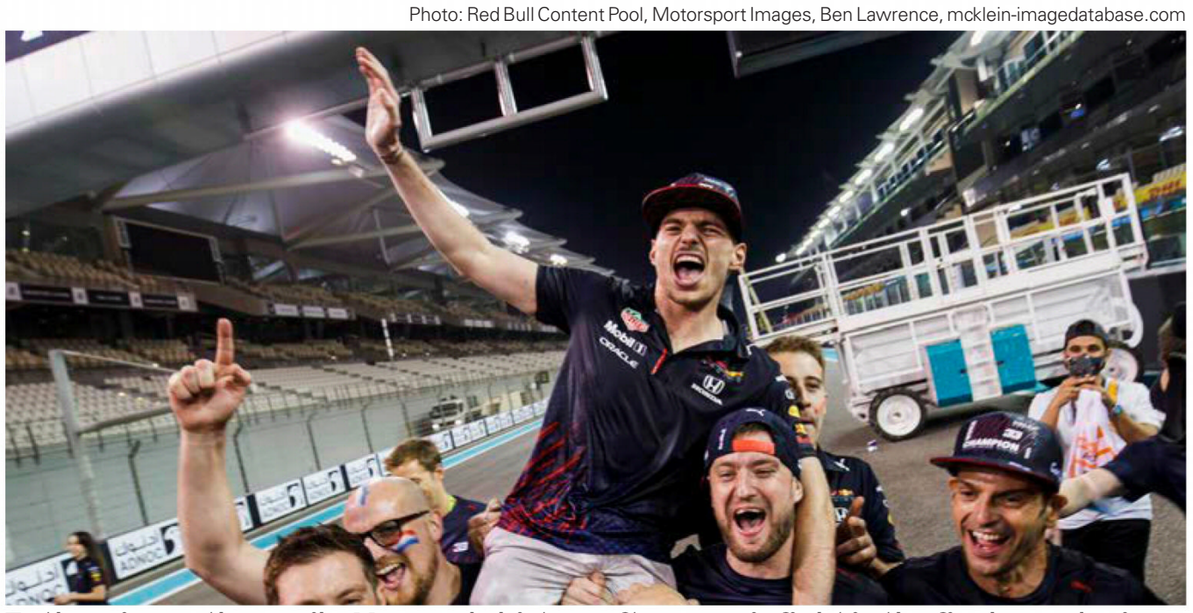

To the winner, the spoils: Max made history after an epic fight in the final grand prix

FORMULA 1 IN THE SPOTLIGHT

It was impossible to ignore the excitement in the build-up to the dramatic climax of the Formula 1 World championship last weekend. It was even mentioned on Saturday night's Match of the Day, which opened its broadcast by telling viewers it was a show featuring more penalties than Max and Lewis had accrued between them all season...

What the race served up was, in effect, an excellent snapshot of the season as a whole. Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton were streets ahead of the rest and indulged in some wheel-to-wheel combat worthy of two men at the very top of their game. From the opening lap, the grand prix fizzed with controversy and action. It was hard for the viewers to catch their breath, and the simmering tension boiled up to one of the category's most exciting final minutes ever.

Forget the unfathomable decisions by race control, forget the penalties and censures: this was gloves off sport at its best and huge congratulations must go to both Max Verstappen and his Red Bull team. It rolled the dice at the end of the race and it came up in its favour. It didn't have much of an option, to be fair, but it still took some bravery to pull the Dutchman into the pits in the closing stages. Credit to the team for that.

The best news of all, though, was that the race delivered in spades. All those casual views – even those who would have been tempted to tune in after watching Match of the Day – got a demonstration of the excitement and thrills of top-level motorsport. If only 1% of them tune in again at the start of 2022, then the Abu Dhabi finale will have done its job.

Elsewhere in this issue, we look back at the season just gone in the World Rally Championship and the World Rallycross Championship. Sebastien Ogier's title was supreme and he will be missed when he steps away from a full-time programme in 2022, while Johan Kristoffersson proved that it is his talent, and not just the machinery he is driving, that has helped him to his fourth global crown.

Our readers' questions guest this week is Perry McCarthy, a man whose career trajectory should have brought him bigger rewards than he was ultimately able to achieve. He is one of the biggest characters in motorsport and tackles the posers that were set for him with his usual good humour and honesty. It is an interview worth reading.

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MOTORSPORT NEWS

ISSUE MJ3313 DECEMBER 16 2021

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Max is top in the Middle East

Red Bull man scoops a dramatic World championship

Johan maintains top spot

The Swede's path to a fourth rallycross crown

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Rallying's epic UK adventure

The competitors got more than the bargained for on the R.A.C.

Readers' Q&A: Perry McCarthy

The original Stig pulls up a chair to tackle the MN readers' questions

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Ogier makes it eight with WRC title triumph

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FORMULA 1 REPORT: ABU DHABI

Photos: Motorsport Images

Defining moment: Max overtakes Hamilton

Lewis Hamilton led from the get-go, but lost out in the dying moments

ONE SHOT IS ALL MAX NEEDED FOR THE TITLE

There was drama unabashed in Abu Dhabi. By James Roberts

Verstappen and the Red Bull team celebrate the title

Carlos Sainz signed off his 2022 campaign with a podium

F1 RESULTS

ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX
Laps: 58 **Track:** Yas Marina

	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Max Verstappen	Red Bull-Honda	1h30m17.345s
2	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+2.256s
3	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	+5.173s
4	Yuki Tsunoda	AlphaTauri-Honda	+5.692s
5	Pierre Gasly	AlphaTauri-Honda	+6.531s
6	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	+7.463s
7	Lando Norris	McLaren-Mercedes	+59.200s
8	Fernando Alonso	Alpine-Renault	+1m01.708s
9	Esteban Ocon	Alpine-Renault	+1m04.026s
10	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	+1m06.057s

11 Sebastian Vettel (Aston Martin-Mercedes) +1m07.527s; 12 Daniel Ricciardo (McLaren-Mercedes) -1 lap; 13 Lance Stroll (Aston Martin-Mercedes) -1 lap; 14 Mick Schumacher (Haas-Ferrari) -1 lap; 15 Sergio Perez (Red Bull-Honda) 55 laps/engine; 16 Nicholas Latifi (Williams-Mercedes) 50 laps/accident; 17 Antonio Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo-Ferrari) 33 laps/retired; 18 George Russell (Williams-Mercedes) 26 laps/gearbox; 19 Kimi Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo-Ferrari) 25 laps/wheel. **Drivers' championship:** 1 Verstappen 395.5 points; 2 Hamilton 387.5; 3 Bottas 226; 4 Perez 190; 5 Sainz 164.5; 6 Norris 160. **Constructors' championship:** 1 Mercedes 613.5 points; 2 Red Bull 585.5; 3 Ferrari 323.5; 4 McLaren 275; 5 Alpine 155; 6 AlphaTauri 142.

Tsunoda put in one of the drives of his career for fourth

It couldn't all come down to the final lap, could it?

"Insane!" That's how Max Verstappen described the most extraordinary title showdown in Formula 1 history. One lap to decide the World championship and a controversial end that continued to be argued off-track, long after the chequered flag.

Given the year we've had, it was almost inevitable the final race under the floodlights in Abu Dhabi would end in acrimony.

It looked as if Lewis Hamilton was on the verge of a historic eighth World title. Then Nicholas Latifi crashed. With his wrecked Williams littering the track, the safety car was deployed, just five laps from the end of the race. Across the world, nerves were shredded.

Hamilton had taken the lead from lap one, getting a better getaway than pole position-holder Verstappen. He'd had the measure of the Dutchman all race, even avoiding a first-lap lunge at the chicane on the opening lap. A lock-up from Max in qualifying meant he started on the softer tyre, which resulted in a disadvantage to the medium-shod Hamilton in the opening sequence of the race.

Verstappen swapped to the hard tyres on lap 14 and was immediately followed in by Hamilton a lap later. The Red Bull of Sergio Perez stayed out and inherited the lead, then did a masterful job of holding the Mercedes up, even repassing Hamilton to allow Verstappen to close up a seven-second deficit.

But following the pitstops, the Mercedes man enjoyed a pace advantage and was in command. Red Bull was watching its chances slip away. So when a virtual safety car emerged to recover Antonio Giovinazzi's broken down Alfa Romeo, Red Bull decided to pit Verstappen onto a fresh set of hard tyres. Hamilton stayed out on 23-lap older rubber. Toto Wolff was then heard to lobby FIA race director Michael Masi: "Please, no safety car…"

Racing resumed and Verstappen was 16 seconds behind Hamilton with 18 laps to go. But the gap wasn't closing quick enough. Between them were five lapped cars and it looked all over for Max. From the Red Bull pitwall Christian Horner asked for a "miracle" or "luck from the racing Gods."

Unbelievably, he got his wish when Latifi crashed… Cue safety car and more lobbying of the FIA race director.

Initially, with time – and laps – running out a note from race control said: "Lapped cars will not be allowed to overtake." Then Horner picked up the phone. "Why aren't we getting these lapped cars out of the way? We only need one racing lap," said Horner to Masi.

Then race control gave the order for cars 4-14-31-16 and 5 to overtake the safety car. That placed Verstappen right behind Hamilton on fresher tyres with one lap to go.

The next voice we heard was Wolff: "No, Michael, no! This is not right!" screamed the Merc team boss.

Then it came down to a dramatic winner-takes-all one-lap shootout to decide the title. As the crowd roared with delight, Max dived to the inside of Lewis at Turn 5 to snatch the lead. But Lewis stayed in his rival's wheeltracks as he weaved along the back straight. The pair nearly made contact into Turn 9, but Verstappen stayed ahead. He had done it. Verstappen crossed the line to take his first-ever World championship.

"I love you, can we do this for another 10 or 15 years together?" said the Red Bull man to his team. "I want to stay with you for the rest of my life. Throughout the whole race I kept fighting and to have that opportunity on the last lap was incredible."

Joy and emotion erupted from the Red Bull pitwall, while in contrast at Mercedes, there was fury and anger. In parc ferme Hamilton, and his father Anthony, graciously congratulated the new World champion, but Wolff refused to accept defeat. The team took two protests to the stewards – along with its legal counsel.

Ultimately both decisions were rejected (pending an appeal) and Horner said it was the right decision to restart the race. "We always talked about not finishing races under safety cars and the race director in difficult circumstances made the right call," he said.

In the aftermath of the finish Masi summed up an extraordinary moment to Wolff in simple terms: "It's called a motor race…"

And we have never seen one finish quite like that.

Mercedes bosses riled by late call to let unlapped cars through

Mercedes has lodged its intention to appeal the result of Sunday's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Initially the losing team protested Red Bull, claiming Max Verstappen overtook Lewis Hamilton behind the safety car.

That was rejected. But a second protest claimed two breaches of the sporting regulations. The first was in reference to the fact not all the lapped cars – only the five between Max and Lewis – were allowed to unlap themselves. The second is the rules state the safety car must return to the pits the lap *following* the lapped cars passing it. The protest was dismissed by the stewards who determined the race director has control over the use of the safety car, which included its withdrawal and that once "Safety car in this lap" has been displayed it is mandatory to withdraw it at the end of that lap.

Mercedes did not make any comment to the media after the race.

Russell calls race and title conclusion "absolutely unacceptable"

Britain's George Russell has described the end of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix as "unacceptable" after Max Verstappen passed Lewis Hamilton to win the title.

Russell retired from his final race for Williams with a gearbox problem on lap 26 and watched the final laps from the pitlane. In the immediate aftermath of the finish, he took to social media to vent his frustration at Mercedes's defeat.

"Max is an absolutely fantastic driver who has had an incredible season and I have nothing but huge respect for him, but what just happened is absolutely unacceptable," said Russell. "I cannot believe what we've just seen."

Russell will join Mercedes as team-mate to Lewis Hamilton in 2022 and was one of the first members of the Mercedes camp to vent his anger in the aftermath of the race.

Russell finished the season with 16 points, largely thanks to his Spa podium.

THE CHAMP

Photos: Motorsport Images

All smiles: The new F1 World champion

Emotional: last-gasp win was a tense affair for Max

Adversaries: Max and Hamilton battled all year long

A crash in Baku was one of the lowlights of 2022

The Red Bull man took 10 wins on his way to title

MAX: MY UNBELIEVABLE SEASON AND GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT

World champion Max Verstappen faced the press after an incredible race. This is what he said

Q: First of all, the race, how do you begin to sum-up those 58 laps?
Max Verstappen: "Hectic. In the beginning of course, we were clearly lacking pace, but I just tried to stay with [Lewis Hamilton] as long as I could in whatever fashion. We just didn't have the pace. Already the start wasn't good, somehow but then yeah, it was just really difficult out there. I was, of course, a bit on my own. Checo [Perez] then did an amazing job to try and keep Lewis behind, so then the gap was again reduced, so then we started over again but clearly, he was again pulling away. Then we tried something different with the virtual safety car, but it didn't really work out because clearly, we still didn't have the pace – but then of course it all turned pretty crazy at the end with that safety car and that restart in the last lap."

Q: How were emotions in the cockpit at the end?
MV: "Pretty crazy but also a massive cramp in my leg in that whole last lap. So I was behind Lewis going through Turn 2, 3 and I had a massive cramp, so I was like full-throttle but barely just having the force to push anymore, so I was happy that there was Turn 5 so I could brake and relax for a few seconds, and then back on it for the two long straights which is very, very painful – but of course for that last lap, you just bite through it but yeah, insane emotions afterwards."

Q: That battle with Lewis on the opening lap, going into Turn 6…
MV: "Yeah, I had a good run and I went for the inside. I didn't even lock-up, I just made the corner, did my line and then, of course, he chose to use the escape route and basically gained an advantage by just staying in front by quite a bit. And nothing happened, so I just focused on myself and continued."

Q: FIA Formula 1 World champion Max Verstappen: has that even begun to sink in yet?
MV: "Slowly. Yeah, it's been an incredible season, not only this race but incredible battles, coming into the season of course I had a feeling we might have a better shot at it, compared to the previous years basically – but to be sitting here right now, that's an unbelievable achievement."

Q: How much have you enjoyed the battle with Lewis?
MV: "Of course, in general, I think we have really enjoyed it. Of course, you know, we had our moments, but I think in a championship battle, that's part of it. And now that the season is over, I think we can relax a little bit more about it – but it's been tense. The competition, almost every race we have been pushing each other to the limit, within our cars as well. And I think that is just really nice to see."

Q: Ten victories. Can we talk through some highlights for you?
MV: "Difficult. Quite a few. Monaco was very nice to win after the difficult times I had there, through myself but also just unlucky moments. Two wins in Austria, my home win in Zandvoort, and I think of course now at the end, just the crazy outcome of this race, of course, will definitely be a highlight."

Q: What about moments where it wasn't going so well? Lowlights, you might say.
MV: "Sitting in hospital the whole evening having checks [after the British Grand Prix], that was definitely the lowest point. Because you don't want to be there. Baku was not nice. But those are the moments that make you a better driver, I think, at the end."

Q: Was there ever a moment when you thought that the task looks just too hard?
MV: "Well, of course today it looked very difficult at some point – because we didn't have the pace. I didn't really see an opportunity to turn things around. But then of course, at the end with that safety car, we had that free stop, so we went for it, for softer tyres, and yeah, just an incredible last lap. Of course, I had more grip but I still had to go for it but yeah, we did."

Q: Max, when you think about the journey you've been on since you first started karting. It's been incredible.
MV: "It all flashes through your head now, especially with my dad, travelling through all of Europe for that one goal, first was, of course, to be in Formula 1, to hope that you can win a race, and you hear the national anthem, but then of course the ultimate goal was the World championship, which is very hard to achieve but now that happened. Yeah, it's just insane – but also to have all my close family friends, my dad, my manager, my girlfriend all here, that makes it extra special." ■

"Winning the title is just insane"

Max Verstappen

From karting to champion: Max

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RACING NEWS

Photos: Motorsport Images

Todt: a new role?

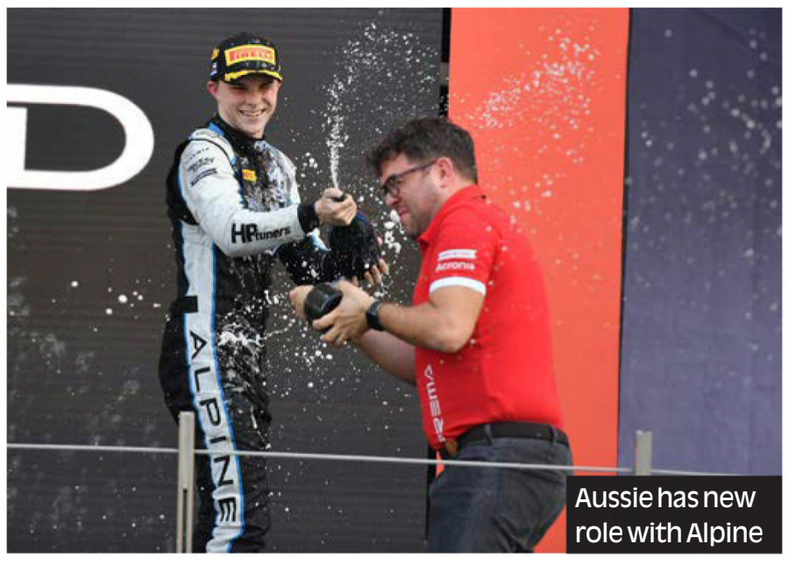
FERRARI COY ON POSSIBLE TODT RETURN

Ferrari Formula 1 boss Mattia Binotto has scotched rumours that outgoing FIA president Jean Todt will make a return to the Scuderia in the near future.

Todt led the Prancing Horse during its most successful period between 1994 and 2008 and helped the team to six consecutive constructors' titles. Reports in the Italian media had linked the Frenchman to a return to Ferrari, but these rumours have been downplayed.

Binotto said: "I heard and read about some speculations in that respect. So far, they are only speculations. Personally, I've worked with Jean Todt, he has been my boss, I think I learnt a lot from him.

"It has been an honour to work with him and I will say that as well in case whatever would be the future, it will still be an honour for me to work together with him because I still believe that, as well as course as [racing director Laurent] Mekies and as a team, there's still much to learn."



Aussie has new role with Alpine

Champion Piastri will be blocked from returning to Formula 2 in 2022 as the winner

GRAND PRIX TEST SESSION FOR NEW FORMULA 2 CHAMPION PIASTRI

Newly crowned Australian prepares for role with Alpine with rookie test outing

By Matt James

Oscar Piastri took his third single-seater title in three years when he clinched the Formula 2 crown in Abu Dhabi.

The Australian sealed the title in the opening race of the weekend by finishing on the podium ahead of his team-mate and championship rival Robert Shwartzman. That put the Prema racing man out of reach, and he went on to win the final race of the weekend at Yas Marina.

The opening race was won by Jehan Daruvala for Carlin, Alfa Romeo F1 recruit Guanyu Zhou won the second before Piastri signed off in style in the longer feature race.

Piastri is not allowed to return to the category as the title winner and will now concentrate on his role as a test and development driver for the Alpine F1 squad.

Alpine has confirmed that Piastri will take part in the F1 rookie test in Abu Dhabi this week. The 20-year-old racer said "Any day in an F1 car is pretty special but to drive the current one with other drivers on track in a somewhat competitive environment is very cool. Thanks to the team for this opportunity."

Alpine boss Laurent Rossi said: "Oscar has had a fantastic Formula 2 season this year, again showing his class, and this Young Driver Test appearance is well earned. This test will be part of Oscar's ongoing development as he prepares to become the team's reserve driver for 2022, to aid and assist Fernando Alonso and Esteban Ocon and our development teams on and off the track."

ABU DHABI SNARES DEAL TO HOST F1 FINALE

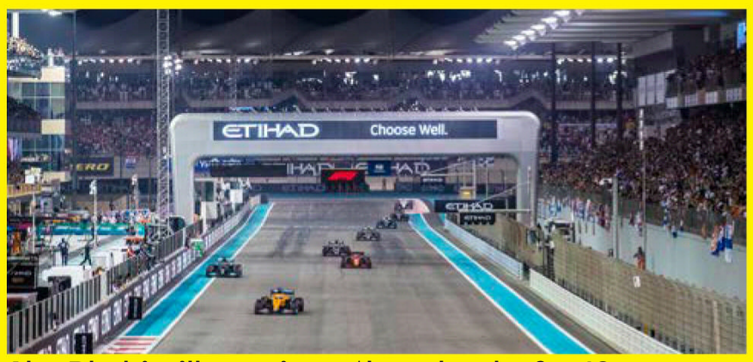
The grand prix showdown will remain in Abu Dhabi until at least 2030 after a new deal was stuck between circuit bosses and Formula 1 bosses

The race was first held in the country in 2009 and has been the sign off for the season since 2014. In 2014, the race counted for double points in a one-off experiment which has not been repeated.

The circuit was modified ahead of last weekend's finale, with two chicanes being removed and lap times dropped by 13 seconds per tour.

F1 boss Stefano Domenicali said: "The promoter, Abu Dhabi Motorsport Management, always creates an incredible show for the final race of every F1 season and combined with the changes made to improve the racing on the Yas Marina Circuit, we are excited for many years of racing to come."

Next year's race will take place on November 20 to avoid a clash with the World Cup in Qatar.



Abu Dhabi will remain on the calendar for 10 seasons

KOBAYASHI TAKES CONTROL OF TOYOTA WEC ATTACK

Kamui Kobayashi has been named as the new boss of the Toyota World Endurance Championship squad.

The Japanese will continue to be part of the operation's driver roster. He has twice claimed the World Endurance Championship title with the marque, taking this year's crown alongside Mike Conway and Jose Maria Lopez in Bahrain last month.

Kobayashi, a former grand prix racer with Toyota, Sauber and Cateham, is a replacement for outgoing team president Hisatake Murata, who has been handed new duties within the Toyota Motor Company.

Kobayashi, 35, said: "I look forward to fighting for the World championship as a driver and team principal. I will bring all my experience as a race driver to my new job, and I know I have a fantastic team who will support me in my mission.

"We are preparing for a new era of Hypercar competition in WEC, when many new manufacturers will join the fight, and TGR is evolving to prepare itself for this new challenge.

"This new team structure is an important step for us to stay sharp and be ready for the next battle."

Kobayashi has a new job

SATO CONTINUES INDYCAR JOURNEY WITH FRESH DEAL

Two-time Indy 500 winner Takuma Sato will remain on the IndyCar grid next term after confirming a deal to join Dale Coyne Racing with Rick Ware Racing.

The 44-year-old was left without a seat when he split from Rahal Letterman Racing after four seasons and four wins with the team.

He finished 11th in the standings least season with a best result of fourth at Detroit. Dale Coyne's last victory in IndyCar was in 2018 with Sebastien Bourdais at the wheel.

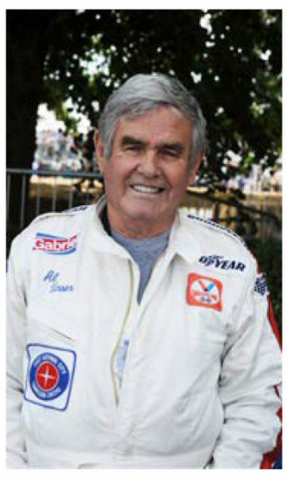
Sato said: "I am extremely excited that we were able to work out a deal with Dale, Rick and everyone at Dale Coyne Racing. With Honda an integral part of Dale Coyne Racing, it seemed like a great fit. The team has proven year after year that they are very competitive on all types of circuits. Particularly the speed that team has shown in recent years at the Indy 500 were very impressive."

Sato's team-mate is likely to be 2021 Indy Lights runner-up David Malukas. Confirmation of his deal is expected shortly.

Sato has a new home in IndyCar for 2022 season

OBITUARY

Al Unser Sr May 29 1939 – December 9 2021



Four-time Indianapolis 500 winner Al Unser Sr died on December 9 at the age of 82 after a long illness.

One of four racing brothers from a total of 12 family members who would enter the sport, Unser took part in his first Indy 500 in 1965. He would go on to take the start at Indy 27 times, winning in 1970, 1971, 1978 and most famously in 1987 after a late call-up led to him becoming the oldest winner of the Borg-Ward Trophy at 47 years of age.

Known as 'Big Al' after the rise of his son Al Unser Jr, whom the older Unser beat to the 1985 Indycar championship title by one point in 1985, the esteem in which he was held by his rivals was unique. Unser's career-long rival Mario Andretti called him "One of the top five racers who has ever lived" in his tribute. "The kindest, calmest, smartest, toughest, most fun, well-liked guy ever."

Unser succumbed to cancer this weekend after a 17-year battle, MN sends its sincere condolences to his family and friends.

NEW INSPIRE RACING PROJECT STARTS WITH 2022 BRITISH GT

BTCC race winner Howell part of new British GT Ekris M4 venture as focal point of larger project

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

Successful Ekris M4 full British GT debut

By Graham Keilloh

A new team joins British GT next season in Inspire Racing that will race an Ekris M4 GT4 with Pro-Am driving duo Richard Marsh and BTCC race winner Gareth Howell.

The same crew made three British GT4 appearances with a McLaren in 2017, and now it is spearheading its own project. The new team is led by Julian Griffin and it is the focal point of a larger project. More details on the venture will follow in the new year.

The Ekris-built M4 was originally released before BMW's own in-house GT4 car and is homologated separately, and will be making its full-season British GT debut after achieving success in continental Europe.

British karting champion Howell won three British Touring Car Championship races in 2005 and '06 in a Team Dynamics Honda. Marsh also has BTCC experience and more recently competed in GT Cup and the Kumho BMW championship.

Marsh and Howell: new venture

Marsh said: "This is our second crack at British GT after our previous attempt had to be aborted mid-season due to circumstances beyond our control.

"This time I wanted to take matters into our own hands and for a purpose beyond purely racing. In doing so it's also allowed me to introduce an idea that I've had for a long time, which will be announced in 2022. It's important stuff – we can't wait for people to see it as we know many will want to get involved judging by current interest. However, we need a few more things to be in place before going public."

TCR UK BECOMES STANDALONE CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER GRID RISE

TCR UK has been awarded championship status by Motorsport UK and the category's promoter Maximum Motorsport has in response received a six-year deal from global TCR promoter World Sporting Consulting.

From 2022 TCR UK will operate as a standalone championship featuring only homologated TCR cars running under the supervision of WSC's technical department and to the WSC's balance-of-performance criteria.

TCR UK was introduced in 2018 but struggled for grid numbers for a time, with just three cars competing for TCR UK honours in 2019's season opener at Oulton Park. For the last three seasons TCR UK has shared its grids with the Touring Car Trophy and more recently also with the Volkswagen Racing Cup. However this year TCR turnouts have improved and 15 raced at its Oulton round in July.

WSC president Marcello Lotti said: "We have been watching what's happening in the UK very closely and we were extremely pleased to see the series take a big step forward in 2021. TCR UK is now the fastest growing of the regional championships.

"The number of TCR cars in the UK has trebled in the past year, which is a reflection on the good work being done by the organisers."

TCR UK grids have grown and now it has got championship status

TV star Flintoff (l) got competitive debut with Ginetta's help

GINETTA AND FLINTOFF STAR ON BBC'S TOP GEAR

Ginetta's driver development programme played a central role on BBC One's Top Gear programme earlier this month in preparing presenter Andrew 'Freddie' Flintoff for his racing debut.

The ex-cricketer undertook simulator training then got two days testing at Blyton Park in a Ginetta G56 GTA with expert tuition from Ginetta factory driver Mike Simpson.

Flintoff then got his first-ever competitive race action pairing with racer and fellow Top Gear presenter Chris Harris in a Ginetta G55 GT4 in Snetterton's GT Cup round in June.

Simpson said: "It's fantastic to be able to highlight what we do to a global audience on Top Gear. It was a great experience working with Freddie. He was completely new to motorsport, but came in with the levels of focus, dedication and determination to improve that you would expect from someone who was a professional sportsman and one of the best in his discipline."

Orton is back after late-'21 switch

RACE CAR CONSULTANTS PICKS FIRST THREE OF FIVE-STRONG GINETTA ENTRY

Race Car Consultants has confirmed teenagers Will Orton, Nat Hodgkiss and Kian Donaldson as its first three drivers for a planned expanded five-car entry in 2022's Ginetta GT5 Challenge.

The Suffolk-based team had a best ever campaign last year with Magnus Kriklywi finishing fifth in the table and at Croft taking the team's first Ginetta race win.

The 2020 Fiesta Junior runner-up Orton, 16, joined Race Car Consultants from Alastair Rushforth Motorsport for the final weekend of his 2021 debut GT5 campaign, and finished second – his maiden podium – in the final race.

Hodgkiss, 18, raced for Race Car Consultants during his first GT5 campaign last year and finished seventh in the table with a best result of third. Nineteen-year-old Mazda MX-5 championship graduate Donaldson will be making his Ginetta racing debut next season.

Team principal David Ellesley said: "I am thoroughly looking forward to 2022, we have a raft of talent confirmed already. I firmly believe that as a team we can hit the ground running come the opening round in April.

"Our final two drivers are yet to be announced but, having tested several new names, I am confident we will have a full five-car line-up for the season."

JAMSPORT'S INAUGURAL FIESTA JUNIOR SCHOLARSHIP IS GO

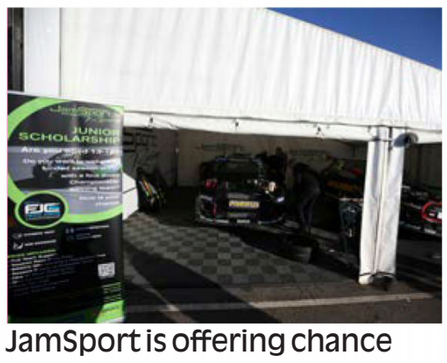
Fiesta and Mini championship-winning team JamSport Racing last weekend started its selection for its inaugural scholarship to win a fully funded season in 2022's Fiesta Junior championship.

The prize includes entry and registration fees for the championship for drivers aged between 14 and 17, plus hire of a race-winning car, full team support, a season's supply of tyres plus one-to-one tuition.

The scholarship selection's first stage kicked off at Blyton Park last Saturday with 20 hopefuls, 10 to 12 of whom will proceed to the next stage before a final of five or six drivers.

Team founder Jamie Going told Motorsport News: "For us, it's just to give another Deagen Fairclough [JamSport frontrunning 2021 Fiesta Junior driver] an opportunity. And if we find that unicorn you never know where it might lead to. It'll also bring more interest into the Junior championship.

"[The scholarship is about] finding real experience and spending as much time in car as possible. It doesn't necessarily [to win] have to be the fastest lap time, it's the driver that learns [and] listens. It's trying to find that unique package."



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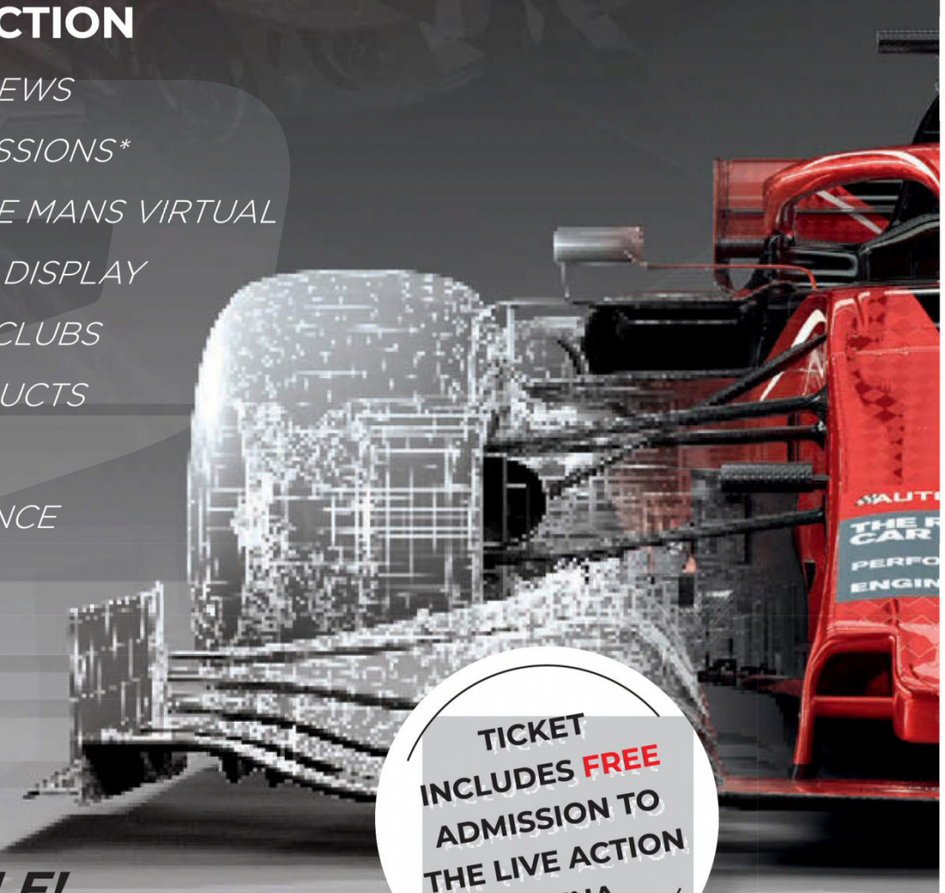

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RACING NEWS

NORTHERN FF1600 BECOMES SUPER CLASSIC CHAMPIONSHIP FOR PRE-1999 CARS ONLY

Heritage FF1600's move into larger championship prompts BRSCC to bring forward plans

By Graham Keilloh

The British Racing and Sports Car Club's Northern Formula Ford championship will have pre-1999 cars only from 2022 and be renamed the BRSCC Super Classic Formula Ford championship for pre-'99 cars.

The club moved its plans forward by 12 months to change the eligibility to only cars built from 1998 and before due to demand after James Beckett's Heritage FF1600 standalone contest for pre-1993 cars moved to become a class within Beckett's new United Formula Ford that includes all car ages.

BRSCC's Northern championship was rebranded for 2020 as Northern and Super Classic Formula Ford to raise awareness of its Super Classic classes introduced for 2019 alongside its P class, or Pro class, for modern machinery.

Daly: responding to demand

BRSCC chairman Peter Daly told Motorsport News: "We are going to be running a Super Classic pre-'99 championship because there are a number of pre-'99 cars going right down to 1988 which are all capable of winning races overall. So for 2022 we are dropping our Pro class so any post-'98 cars will not be eligible to race in our championship.

"And the reason why we're doing that is I've had a number of people contact us to say that they would like to race in their Heritage/Super Classic era cars with other similar machinery.

"Any cars that are post-'98 are very welcome as guest drivers or championship contenders in our National Formula Ford championship.

"[The Heritage move] tipped us over. It's brought our plans forward by 12 months; we'd already got plans to run Super Classic only."

Photo: Rachel Bourne, Jakob Ebrey, Steve Jones, Jon Elsey

BRSCC's Northern FF1600 contest will be for its Super Classic cars only

F3 Cup competitors are still pushing for the contest to continue

F3 CUP "50-50" REPRIEVE CHANCE AFTER AXE REPORT

The F3 Cup championship has a renewed chance of going ahead next year despite it being reported that the Monoposto-run category had been axed for 2022.

F3 Cup's future was in doubt after low grid numbers plus competitors' differences about its future shape.

Monoposto coordinator Rachel Lovett told MN however that some competitors are still working for it to continue. "It was [running in 2022] and then it wasn't and now it might be again," Lovett said.

"Some of [the drivers] wanted to run it more Radical/GT Cup style, the other half of the grid wanted it more club-racing style. They couldn't get enough support for one or the other way, and it fell apart.

"But the group of them who wanted it more club-racing style they approached Monoposto to ask if they could join us. They think they might have got enough of them together to do another season and have their own grid, so we're looking for what track time's available and if we can pull a calendar together.

"So there might well be an F3 Cup next year. It's just if they can pull together enough drivers wanting to do it. It might be running under the Monoposto banner, it might be standalone, or it might not happen at all. At the moment it's 50/50, it's not been canned yet."

ALBERT AND DOCKER BACK FOR FULL-TIME GT CUP CHARGE

British GT title challenger Jordan Albert and Britcar class champion Tim Docker will return to the GT Cup for a full 2022 season racing a Fox Motorsport McLaren 570S GT4.

The Pro-Am pair, who are racing in the GTH class, entered two mid-season GT Cup events last year at Silverstone and Donington Park in a Fox McLaren and took a podium finish with third place on their opening weekend.

It was BRDC rising star Albert's first racing since having to abandon a 2020 British GT4 title challenge due to sponsor issues. For 2019 Britcar overall runner-up Docker meanwhile, 2022 will contain his first full-time campaign in three years after scaling back his racing due to Covid's implications.

Albert said: "After our two events last year went better than expected, the plan was always to expand things for this year"

More racing in '22 for Albert

PROGRAMME FOR 750MC CLIO RACERS UNVEILED

The 750 Motor Club has unveiled details of the new Foundation Programme for 2022's Clio Sport championship via which a racers can join the grid with an outlay from £12,095.

The 750MC's Clio 182 championship, which ran for six seasons as a standalone 182 formula, is rebranded as the Clio Sport championship from 2022 with the introduction of the 197/200 generation chassis.

The club in 2020 launched the Foundation Programme initiative for its Type R Trophy, and Clio Sport's version builds on this. The Clios' all-inclusive package comprises a freshly built race car and all the main elements required for the full 14-race, six-meeting season, including the registration fee, a pre-season trackday, as well as additional brake pads and tyres.

There are priced options for a licence holder or for a novice driver – with the latter package also including an ARDS test, full race kit and an instructor session – as well as options that include a donor car.

Draft regulations for the 2022 Clio Sport championship have also been published on 750MC's website.

750MC has expanded its programme to help racers get on the grid

Australian Smith gets a full GB3 campaign after sampling it in '21

SMITH RETURNS FOR FULL GB3 SEASON WITH DOUGLAS

Tommy Smith is to complete the full 2022 GB3 championship season with Douglas Motorsport after a part campaign with the team this year.

The 19-year-old Australian joins American racer Max Esterson in the team's confirmed driver line-up for next season.

Smith competed at three GB3 meetings in the latter part of 2021's season with Douglas, with his best results two 12th-place finishes. Smith also raced in 2021's Formula Regional European Championship after returning to competition after sitting out 2020 due to Covid's implications.

Team principal Wayne Douglas said: "We thoroughly enjoyed working with Tommy this season, so we're delighted that he'll be back with us for a full season in 2022. He did a good job with his limited running this year, so with a full pre-season under his belt we're confident he can enjoy a strong competitive season."

Smith added: "I really enjoyed the selected rounds of GB3 that I competed in during 2021 as a part of my first season in Europe. That experience allows me to carry confidence going into 2022"

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RALLY NEWS

TOYOTA BOFFIN FOWLER EXPLAINS HYBRID CHALLENGES

The man leading the technical team behind Elfyn Evans' World Rally Championship bid in 2022 has spoken of the challenges posed by the new hybrid-based Rally1 regulations.

Tom Fowler, Toyota's WRC technical director, is overseeing the development of the GR Yaris WRC Rally1, which Evans will drive alongside his team-mates Esapekka Lappi, Sebastien Ogier, Takamoto Katsuta and Kalle Rovanpera.

"With the hybrid technology coming to the WRC for the first time there's been a huge number of challenges," said Fowler.

"Integrating that system into a rally car is the biggest challenge because we have to keep everything in specific positions, as low as possible, take care of the centre of gravity and the inertia of the car. The new system has a significant size and a significant weight [and] to get that positioned into the car so it's functional and also keeping the car handling characteristics and performance at the level it needs to be has really been a massive challenge."

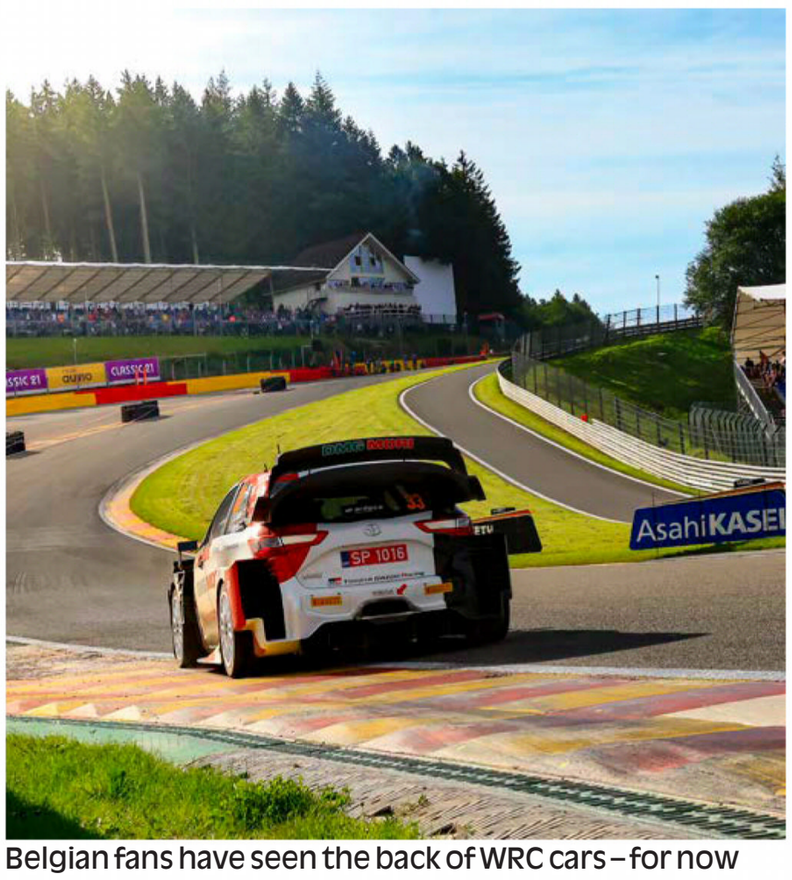
Fowler has also spoken of the frustrations caused by delays receiving parts and conceded that there's still plenty of work to do to be ready for the Monte Carlo Rally on January 20-23. "The last few weeks will be a challenge to get everything built and ready but at this moment it's looking good and it will be a proud moment when it's driving in Monte because of the amount of work that's gone into it," said Fowler.

D-DAY APPROACHES FOR RALLY NORTHERN IRELAND'S PROSPECTS

FIA World Council meeting set to rubberstamp calendar – but UK's slot it still unclear

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

Northern Ireland's hopes of a top event are clinging on



Belgian fans have seen the back of WRC cars – for now

By Graham Lister

Rally Northern Ireland's bid to join the World championship hung in the balance earlier this week.

At the time of writing, Motorsport News understood that a final 13-event calendar for next year's WRC was due to be submitted to the FIA's World Motor Sport Council in Paris for approval yesterday (Wednesday).

However, it remained unclear if the Tarmac-based 'TBC' event on the schedule sanctioned by the WMSC in October will become Rally Northern Ireland.

There was no official update on the status of the Belfast event prior to this week's MN going to print although informed sources have repeatedly maintained that Rally Northern Ireland will take place from August 18-21 – the vacant calendar slot – as round nine of the first season of the Rally1 era.

While FIA championship calendars can be modified at a later date through an electronic vote by WMSC members, the December gathering is traditionally the point at which final schedules for the following season are rubberstamped.

It would also be unlikely that Jean Todt would allow for any unfinished business from his final WMSC meeting as FIA president.

Rally Northern Ireland going ahead remains dependent on government funding being signed off. Event director Bobby Willis's reluctance to comment stems from a keenness not to compromise the tireless efforts to bring the WRC to his country. That stance follows Tourism Northern Ireland's decision in January to hold off on backing a WRC event in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Tourism Northern Ireland recognises that hosting Rally Northern Ireland in 2021 represented a positive opportunity to profile the region globally, and would serve to celebrate Northern Ireland's motorsport heritage," Willis said in January.

"However, it feels Covid-19 could diminish the substantial economic benefits WRC historically bestows upon its host regions, and therefore investment would not represent best value for public money at this time. We must accept the situation and focus on our discussions to explore the avenues for 2022."

WRC Promoter, the championship's commercial rights holder, has previously championed a UK round of the series, while Jona Siebel, managing director of the Munich-based firm, has spoken in support of Rally Northern Ireland.

Matton: Rally NI supporter

When Belgium's Ypres Rally was announced in January as the replacement for the planned Rally Northern Ireland last August, FIA rally chief Yves Matton praised the work of the event organiser.

"Bobby Willis and his team have put in a lot of work and efforts to bring the WRC to Northern Ireland and we're very disappointed there will be no rally in the UK this year," the Belgian said at the time.

Rally Northern Ireland represents the only hope of a UK WRC event, at least for the foreseeable future, following the Welsh Government's decision to end its support of Rally GB in 2020.

A plan B for the WRC calendar should Rally Northern Ireland's funding bid fail has not been made public.

Adamo has parted ways with Hyundai of 2022

TEAM CONFIDENT DESPITE ADAMO SPLIT FROM HYUNDAI

Hyundai Motorsport president Scott Noh is adamant that Andrea Adamo's exit from the firm won't affect its preparations for the 2022 World Rally Championship season.

Adamo, the former team principal, left the Germany-based outfit last week "for personal reasons" according to the official announcement.

Korean Noh will oversee the company's activities in rallying and racing in the short term until Adamo's replacement is appointed.

"Our operations will continue to run as scheduled ahead of the 2022 season," Noh said.

Adamo, 50, joined Hyundai Motorsport in 2015 to establish its customer racing division from scratch.

Although the i20 R5 achieved mixed results, the i30 N TCR was a huge success with Gabriele Tarquini and Norbert Michelisz winning back-to-back WTCR – FIA World Touring Car Cup – titles in 2018 and 2019.

Italian Adamo replaced Michel Nandan as Hyundai's WRC team principal for 2019 and while the squad claimed the makes' crown that season and again in 2020, it was soundly beaten by Toyota in 2021 as a spate of mechanical failures hit hard.

A controversial figure who was rarely at ease giving media interviews, Adamo previously held senior engineering roles for sportscar, touring car and rally teams including Lola, JAS Motorsport and Abarth.

EUROPEAN RALLY BROADCASTS RAMPED UP FOR 2022

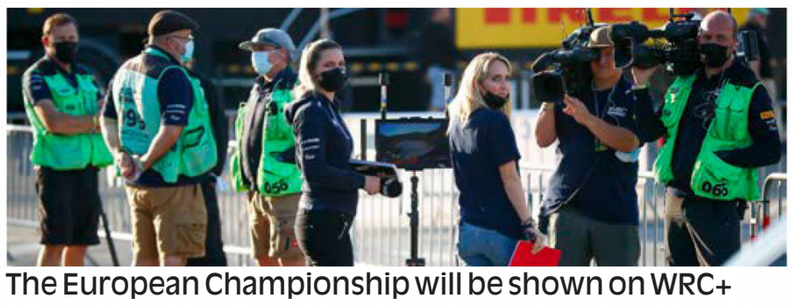
Subscribers to the World Rally Championship's WRC+ live streaming service will get to watch all eight rounds of the European championship in 2022 for no extra cost.

WRC Promoter, which launched WRC+ in 2018, has taken over the European Rally Championship's commercial rights and confirmed last week that "every special stage from every ERC round will be streamed live and on demand to watch on WRC+".

The package for fans will also include videos from the ERC archive, season reviews, documentaries and special one-off programmes.

Live commentary from all ERC events will be available in English.

The 2022 calendar was due to be signed off at yesterday's FIA World Motor Sport Council meeting.



The European Championship will be shown on WRC+

Photos: Kevin Money, Timo Anis, M-Sportj

This year's champion Greer gave seal of approval to the proposed '22 calendar

NI RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP REPEATS FORMAT IN 2022

Five asphalt events, three on closed roads for the series

By Luke Barry

The Northern Ireland Rally Championship will retain a five-round calendar for 2022, with three of these confirmed as closed-road events.

North Armagh Motor Club will host the first round – a single-venue affair – on Saturday, February 19 at Bishopscourt in County Down. The baton then passes to the District Motor Club at Ballynahinch on March 12.

Round three has the return of Maiden City Motor Club's Maiden City Stages Rally. Last held in 2019, it continues to be based out of Strabane but this time around it will feature two stages run three times.

The penultimate counter on June 4 is Cookstown Motor Club's Tyrone Stages before all eyes turn to the Down Rally on July 23. It promises to have added appeal as Rathfriland Motor Club representatives will welcome competitors from the Northern Ireland and Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally Championship.

Giving his views on the 2022 calendar, reigning Northern Ireland Rally champion Jonathan Greer said: "It's good to see a few more closed-road events next year. The first two being single venue lets people get back into it after the winter, so it's a good balance.

"We don't know much about the format of the closed-road events yet but my initial impressions are that the championship looks good next year," he added.

Prize fund could launch BRC push for 2022

LLOYD WINS JOHN EASSON AWARD

Ioan Lloyd has won the coveted John Easson Award from the 2300 Club and plans to use the £6000 prize fund to progress into the British Rally Championship.

Lloyd, 19, was named as a finalist for the award along with James Lepley and Billy Grew after his impressive season in the BTRDA and Welsh Rally Championship.

"I'm really chuffed to be honest and jumped at the chance to apply but I was really surprised to get into the final, so to have won it is outstanding!" Lloyd told MN. "It's a huge privilege to have won it... I've got a lot of respect for John Easson's accomplishments in road rallying himself, so to add my name to the list that have won it already, I'm really honoured.

"It's not set in stone yet, but the BRC is our natural step-up," he added on his 2022 plans. "Our current car is for sale at the minute, so if it doesn't sell, we'll stick to that and do the BRC Academy .''But if we are fortunate enough to sell it we'll step up to a more modern Rally4 and give the Junior BRC a shot… I think either option isn't too bad!"

CREIGHTON MAKES BID FOR JUNIOR WRC RETURN

MN National Rally Driver of the Year, William Creighton, is working on sealing a Junior WRC return for next year after testing the Ford Fiesta Rally3 in Poland last week.

Drivers were invited to the Silesia Ring in Poland to try the four-wheel-drive machine, which replaces the front-wheel-drive Rally4 variant, and Creighton was left impressed.

"I've done very little in a four-wheel-drive car, especially on gravel, so stepping from any front-wheel-drive car into any four-wheel-drive car is quite a big step and it's a different driving style, so it was good to get a run in the car," Creighton told Motorsport News.

Asked if the test was a precursor to a second JWRC campaign in 2022, Creighton said: "I wouldn't have been at the test if I wasn't considering it [but] there's nothing set in stone… we haven't got the budget in place yet. I would see it now as either making the step into the Rally3 or if it wasn't that, looking at something in a Rally2."

Among other drivers at the M-Sport Poland test were JBRC competitors Eamonn Kelly and Johnnie Mulholland.

Creighton sampled the M-Sport Fiesta Rally3 in Polish test

Hyundai's JBRC prize drive will expand to two crews in 2022

HYUNDAI PRIZE DRIVE FOR JBRC CHAMP

Next year's Junior British Rally champion will once again receive a prize drive in a Hyundai i20 N Rally2 on a European round of the 2023 World Rally Championship.

The prize was added to this year's series and was awarded to William Creighton and Liam Regan. Hyundai Motorsport Customer Racing will however be offering the opportunity for a second driver to test the i20, given to any BRC-registered competitor who impresses the team throughout the 2022 season.

BRC championship manager Iain Campbell said: "We have always recognised the Junior BRC as a fundamental breeding ground for talented youngsters in British rallying and we are thrilled that a global icon such as Hyundai Motorsport also shares the same opinion. This prize truly is ground-breaking for our Juniors and our 2019 winner Josh McErlean is proof of how important the BRC and incentive has been to his career. The championship extends it thanks to Hyundai Motorsport."

The JBRC has also been subtly tweaked for 2022 as the age limit to compete has been increased from 26 to 27-years-old.

RESCHEDULED GRIZEDALE TO KICK OFF 2022 FORESTRY SEASON

The forest British rallying season will begin on January 14-15 next year after organisers of the Grizedale Stages Rally secured a date for the event.

Grizedale will take place

Grizedale was originally scheduled for December 3-4 but was postponed last month due to damage from Storm Arwen. Instead of cancelling the rally for a second successive year, organisers have ensured that the rally can go ahead six weeks later than planned to the original itinerary.

Competitors have been retained on the seeded entry list, but those that are no longer able to compete are urged to contact the entries secretary on entries2021@grizedalestages.co.uk for a full refund.

All entries that remain on the entry list by December 31 will be deemed as final.

Entries have also been re-opened and will also close on December 31. Organisers need a minimum 80 entries for the event to go ahead.

BUTCHER'S SUNNY PROSPECTS FOR 2022

Chris Butcher is confident that the new engine wiring loom fitted to his Nissan Sunny GTi will give him the reliability he needs to challenge for 2-litre class honours in next year's National Asphalt Rally Championship.

The Gwent man was forced to call an early halt to his 2021 season after a series of retirements caused by misfires and other electrical issues.

"The old wiring loom was fitted in 1993, so I'm sure it was time for a complete renewal," Butcher told MN.

The revived Sunny is entered the Mini Tempest Rushmoor Stages on December 28 as a pre-championship test. "We need as much seat time as possible before the Asphalt Championship begins again… 2021 was extremely frustrating and we want to give the championship our best shot in 2022."

Vintage loom cost Butcher

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Landmark result for Merc's star as he denies Norris a maiden win
LEWIS HAILS A MAGICAL MOMENT AS HE HITS A CENTURY
By Matt James
Lewis Hamilton has hailed his rivals after landing his 100th grand prix win in Russia on Sunday, snatching the victory from fellow Brit Lando Norris.
From pole position, McLaren man Norris seemed set to take his maiden victory until a late rain shower left him slithering off the circuit. Hamilton had been called in by his Mercedes team and swapped tyres. He was able to hunt down Norris and take the race win in the dying moments.
Hamilton, who finished one place ahead of his title rival Max Verstappen, says the 100-win benchmark is something he finds hard to believe.
The seven-time champion said: "It's a magical moment. I could only ever have dreamed of still being here and having this opportunity to win these races and get to drive against such phenomenal talent this late in my career and to continue to building with Mercedes. I'm so proud of everything we've done, not only on track but also off."
Full report, p4
Special feature: Lewis's best wins p30
Lewis has achieved his big target
Hamilton left it late to pounce for his 100th win
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RALLY NEWS

WHITE EYES JBRC TITLE PUSH IN 208 RALLY4

Young charger keen to add consistency to the early season pace shown in 2021 campaign

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Sean Hassett

White is aiming for JBRC title and nothing less from 2022 campaign

By Luke Barry

Kyle White is targeting the Junior British Rally Championship title next year after ordering a brand-new Peugeot 208 Rally4.

White was a revelation early in 2021, finishing second at Oulton Park and leading the championship after two rounds before dropping back. The 25-year-old is clear in his ambition for a sustained 2022 campaign.

"I'm not going out to be second: don't make any mistake, that's not the sort of person I am," White told MN. "I'm really hoping to mount a challenge next year and I'm very confident of my chances. I was confident in my pace this year but, moving up, I don't have any excuses... If we don't win it's down to me!

"We know that the Rally4 cars are so much quicker than the R2 cars," he added. "If you look at Jason Dickson when he was in the R2 Fiesta he was 30 seconds a stage off the pace, and he jumped into the Rally4 car and was on William Creighton's pace [and] Eamonn Kelly's pace. It does show there's a massive, massive jump."

White is delighted to get the car just in time for Christmas, too: "I got a Lynx [aftershave] set the other year, I was pretty happy with that but I think this one tops it," he laughed. "A 208 Rally4 is the star on the tree."

Tohill tied off the Irish title after 5 Nations win was confirmed

TOHILL CELEBRATES DOUBLE RX TITLE SWEEP

Just a week after being confirmed as the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy champion, Derek Tohill dominated the final round of the Irish Rallycross Championship at Mondello Park to secure his fifth Irish crown.

Racing his OlsbergsMSE-built Ford Fiesta, Tohill went unbeaten through the three heats of qualifying, setting progressively faster race times to secure pole position for the Supercar final, which he led throughout to score victory with a four-second margin over the similar car of Declan Kelly.

Patrick Ryan completed the podium in the Supercar final with his self-built Mitsubishi Colt but it was rally car class winner Keith Power, also driving a Ford Fiesta, who completed the podium in the Superfinal, one place ahead of Tohill's team-mate Peter McGarry in a Volvo C30.

"To finish first, first you have to finish," said Tohill. "That was our plan today, just to prepare for the event and then to bring the car home, it's had a very tough year so to finish with a win is an extra bonus."

SERIES CREATOR PASTRANA TAKES THE INAUGURAL NITRO RX CROWN

Extreme sports star Travis Pastrana claimed the inaugural Nitro Rallycross crown in a dramatic finale in Florida earlier this month.

The Subaru Motorsports USA driver entered the fifth and final round of the series that he has developed at the head of the points standings. Pastrana started on the second row of the final behind team-mate and title rival, former Formula 1 driver Scott Speed.

NASCAR star Chase Elliott made headlines by winning his heat after turfing veteran Tanner Foust out of the lead in a move for which he was later penalised. He would ultimately finish eighth and last in the final race of the year, which was won by World Rallycross Championship runner-up Timmy Hansen with brother Kevin second.

Third place fell to Speed, tying him at the top of the championship standings with fourth-placed Pastrana, but on countback his team boss Pastrana's extra win earned him a winning advantage.

British drivers Liam Doran and Oliver Bennett again endured difficult weekends in the US and didn't qualify for the final.

Pastrana flew to the first ever Nitro RX championship for Subaru

Fighting back from injury, Duborg has flown in Andros so far

EURO RX ACE DUBOURG HEADS ANDROS TROPHY STANDINGS

Five-time Andros Trophy champion Jean-Baptiste Dubourg leads the French Alps-based ice racing series into its second double-header of the season this weekend in Andorra.

Racing a four-wheel-drive, four-wheel-steer, all-electric works-supported Renault Zoe for his family's DA Racing concern, Dubourg won the season opener at Val Thorens two weeks ago despite carrying full success ballast as the reigning champion before 2019-2020 season champion Aurelien Panis claimed victory in round two the following day.

Panis's father Olivier, the 1996 Monaco Grand Prix winner, was third in the opener. Another ex-F1 star, Romain Grosjean, also being run by DA Racing, couldn't replicate his previous successes in the Andros series and was 13th and seventh in the two rounds.

Dubourg's form in the Andros has been a fillip after being forced to abandon his European Rallycross Championship campaign after breaking his arm at the French round in September. "Many questions were asked about whether I was able to continue my form after what happened in rallycross Loheac this year," he said.

ROAD RALLY ROUND UP

Escorts to the fore in JJ Brown outing

After no North Walian road rallies for almost two years, the JJ Brown Memorial was the second in two weekends. The winning Ford Escort Mk2 was crewed by Gavin Edwards/Daniel Jones, repeating their victory on the same event four years ago.

The organisers had laid out a challenging 90-mile course, with the route information being issued as marked maps at the Start and at the halfway point.

The Escort of Kevin Kerr/Huw Manion suffered a broken strut after hitting a rock. The car blocked the road and led to the cancellation of the Cefyn Metta section.

Top seeds and 2019 winners, Emyr Jones/Max Freeman, were among five crews who were reported by Driving Standards Observer for not stopping at a give way and disqualified.

Edwards/Jones led throughout and cantered away to win by 36 seconds. Behind them there was a close battle for the runner-up spot. The new partnership of Iwan Jones/Dafydd-Sion Lloyd took it steady on the opening sections, but upped the pace as they progressed and, despite clutch problems, managed to overhaul George Williams/Cadog Davies to take second place at the Finish.

Mark 'GT' Roberts/Ryan Griffiths had a problematic time on the early part of the event, but recovered to secure fourth place at the Finish.

Ian Mills

JJ Brown Memorial

Organiser: Caernarvonshire & Anglesey Motor Club **When:** December 4-5 **Where:** North West Wales **Championships:** None **Route:** 90 miles **Starters:** 69.

Results

1 Gavin Edwards/Daniel Jones (Ford Escort Mk2) 2m30s; 2 Iwan Jones/Dafydd-Sion Lloyd (Escort) +36s; 3 George Williams/Cadog Davies (Escort); 4 Mark 'GT' Roberts/Ryan Griffiths (VW Golf GTi); 5 Iwan Roberts/Tudur Griffiths (Toyota Corolla); 6 Sion Eifion Jones/Justin Campbell (Peugeot 205); 7 Adam Jones/Iwan Williams (Escort); 8 Rob Stephens/Nathan Summers (Escort); 9 Gwynfor Jones/Chris Evans (Escort); 10 Stephen Kerr/Aron Jones (Escort).

Class winners: Experts: Roberts/Griffiths; **Semi-Experts:** Alun Jones/Alun Hayward (Escort); **Novices:** Tom Thomas/Owain Baum (Ford Fiesta)

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

HISTORICS

DOWN THE WORKSHOP

1953 COOPER BRISTOL T24/25

Current owner: Peter Mann

Former sportscar machine

It has a famous history

Peter Mann: "I've had the car for 15 years now. It started life as a Formula 2 car in 1953 as a Cooper with an Alta engine. Tony Crook owned it. The Alta engine was very fast but not very reliable and blew up. I think he had the flywheel come off on one occasion. So, during the winter of 1953-54 he decided to create a top-notch sportscar. It's a Mk2 Cooper chassis, and they widened it a bit."

It was modified in period

"They used most of the body and we can see where they actually cut the tail and extended it. In period they cut the rear section and put a tube across and spread all the tubes out to make it wide enough to get a sportscar body on and then they joined those up with a large tube that went straight across the back."

Tony Crook raced it

"In 1954 and 1955 Tony Crook campaigned it really, really hard. It was very successful and won numerous races, always as a sportscar. But Tony had quite a serious accident with it at Goodwood. In the Goodwood nine-hours he spun on some oil and Stirling Moss T-boned him and put Tony in hospital. I think after that he decided that was his last race."

Crook kept the car

"He kept the car for 45 years and eventually sold it to a chap called Michael Parr, a good friend of mine. Michael lived in Kensington and the Bristol showrooms are in Kensington and the car was based there. Michael got to know Tony and badgered and badgered him and Tony eventually sold it to Michael."

It re-emerged in 2000

"From 1955 until 2000, which is when Michael bought, it was basically just tucked away. It is very, very original. Michael raced it in a single-seater race at Monaco and did quite well and sold it to me in 2006. I've had it ever since and John Ure and Nick Wigley race it. I used to race it but gave up five years ago. It's a very competitive car and still very original."

It is road legal

"It's had a Bristol engine since 1954 and Tony Crook first raced it with a supercharged Bristol engine. It's a stunning car to drive and it is road registered, so I go to the pub in it!"

Photos: Paul Lawrence

Historic runners will get used to gravel...

GRAVEL STAGES ONLY FOR BRITISH HISTORIC RALLY RUNNERS IN 2022

No asphalt round available to slot into new season's roster

By Paul Lawrence

For the first time in more than two decades, the British Historic Rally Championship will feature an all-gravel calendar.

A seven-round championship will concentrate solely on forest events after both 2021 asphalt dates fell by the wayside. The Harry Flatters Rally on Epynt will not run in 2022 and the date change for the Three Shires Stages puts it less than a week ahead of the traditional BHRC visit to the Trackrod Rally in Yorkshire.

With no other obvious asphalt dates available, championship manager Colin Heppenstall has opted for seven gravel rallies and has deliberately continued support for events that have not run for one or even two years.

Joining regular BHRC rallies will be the season-opening Riponian Stages Rally in Yorkshire on February 6 and the Woodpecker Stages on September 3. Rally North Wales (March 26), the Plains Rally (May 21) and the Red Kite Stages (June 12) are all due to return after a gap of two years, while both the Trackrod Historic Cup (September 23-24) and Carlisle Stages (October 22) formed part of the shortened three-event programme in 2021.

"The British Historic Rally Championship has always provided a fantastic season of action on some of the best events in the UK," said Heppenstall. "After a somewhat shortened 2021 season, a shift to an all-gravel calendar offers a shake up to the championship next year but we have been careful to select high-quality events."

Formula Atlantic machines will race independently in 2022

ATLANTICS GET THEIR OWN EVENTS NEXT SEASON

Formula Atlantic cars of the 1970s and 1980s will have several standalone races with the Historic Sports Car Club in 2022, starting with a double-header at Brands Hatch on April 2-3.

There is a growing number of Formula Atlantic cars now being reprepared for racing and prime mover Iain Rowley reports constant interest.

"I've had an amazing few days recently with four more new Atlantic owners and drivers contacting me," said Rowley.

The class structure will cover the early twin-cam cars through to the Ford Cosworth BDD-engined cars of the later 1970s and mid-1980s.

Andy Dee-Crowne of the HSCC said: "We see this as a perfect complement to Historic F2, which will return to a pan-European schedule in 2022. The Atlantic cars look superb and it is fitting to have the first race at Brands Hatch, where Formula Atlantic made its UK debut 51 years earlier."

Public will be back at bumper Donington

The race line-up for the 2022 Donington Historic Festival on April 30-May 1 has been launched and will include the first of three 2022 three-hour races for the Royal Automobile Club Pall Mall Cup.

It will be three years since the 2019 DHF ran in front of an audience. The 2020 event was cancelled and 2021 had to run behind closed doors. A programme of Motor Racing Legends races pack out 2022's schedule, including the Amon Cup for Ford GT40s which opens its second season with the first of three races.

Donington Park will be very busy

Harrison's deal to race classic Merlyn

Teenager Samuel Harrison has marked himself out as a leading contender for the Historic Formula Ford season after signing to race with Classic Team Merlyn.

The 17-year-old former karter has raced family-owned Royale and Elden Formula Fords in both Classic and Historic FF over the past two seasons.

At this year's Walter Hayes Trophy, Harrison drove superbly in the team's Merlyn to win both the Pre-Final and Historic Pre '82 Final.

Team boss Mike O'Brien said: "I could see he had a lot of talent and felt that in our environment he could flourish into a real race-winning proposition. It couldn't have gone any better in initial testing and subsequently at the Walter Hayes itself."

A TRIO GRAB GOLD ON A TOUGH RELIABILITY TRIAL

Just three crews earned gold medals when the annual LeJog Land's End to John O'Groats Classic Reliability Trial ended last week. Widely considered the toughest edition for a decade, there were only three gold medals among the 54 finishers. Belgians Kurt Vanderspinnen and Bjorn Vanoverschelde (Alfa Romeo Giulietta Sprint), Dick and Mark Appleton (Mini Cooper S) and Amy Henchoz/Niall Frost (Volvo 142), pictured above, earned the big prizes.

IN BRIEF

GTSCC is busy

The GT and Sports Car Cup race series will feature four dates in 2022, sharing two UK events with Equipe Classic Racing. The pre '66 GT car series will have mini-enduro races at Oulton Park (May 21) and Silverstone GP (June 11-12) as well as a return to the Castle Combe Autumn Classic, which has come forward to September 24. The GTSCC season concludes at the Algarve Classic Festival at Portimao (October 28-30).

HRCR open day

The Historic Rally Car Register Open Day is due to return on Saturday January 15 at the British Motor Museum at Gaydon in Warwickshire. The day will celebrate 40 years since the RAC Golden Fifty Rally in 1982, a key event in the early development of historic rallying. The open day is free for anyone and runs from 0930hrs to 1530hrs.

Grehan's target

Ludlow Ford Escort Mk2 driver Henri Grehan has been working recently to convert his car into full BDG-powered historic trim with a view to contesting the British Historic Rally Championship. Grehan has always been a rapid driver on forest events and the inclusion of his home Woodpecker Rally on the BHRC schedule was very well received.

James's long haul

Seasoned rally co-driver Ryland James completed a personal milestone on the Roger Albert Clark Rally as it marked his co-driving career covering seven decades. Now 67, James from near Carmarthen started competing in 1969 aged 15 in a Ford Anglia. Fifty-two years later, he partnered Malcolm Rich to class success on the Roger Albert Clark in another Ford Anglia.

Senior continues

Philip Senior joined the Classic Formula Ford 1600 grid late last season in a Royale RP24 first used by Paddock Racing when new in 1978. Later, the RP24 was owned by former Royale boss Alan Cornock and will now be tended by Mark Bates and the Shaws Motorsport team at Mallory Park. Senior took an11th place at his first meeting, at Silverstone in October.

More for Legends

Motor Racing Legends had added a weekend date at Snetterton to its schedule. On the weekend of July 16-17, a full programme will include the three-hour Royal Automobile Club Pall Mall Cup, the Amon Cup for Ford GT40s, Pre-War Sports Cars, the Woodcote Trophy/Stirling Moss Trophy and Sixties/Historic Touring Cars.

COLUMNIST

MATT BULL

The oval racing snapper who is missing the thrill of Birmingham Wheels

Photos: Matt Bull

In my job as an oval racing photographer I have visited many tracks that have, sadly, since been closed for redevelopment.

There was an air of inevitability about some of them, such as the showpiece Wimbledon stadium. The track lasted far longer than many of us could have wished for, despite being in an area of South London where any land has a very high value to property developers.

But the motorsport industry as a whole should be very concerned about the latest tracks to fall under the developer's axe. On the same weekend at the end of October, both St Day in Cornwall and Birmingham Wheels Raceway held what could well be their last meetings. Unlike many of the others tracks that have disappeared, most of which were under private ownership, both these tracks were on council-owned land.

Birmingham Wheels has a place close to my heart. It has stood on the very active Birmingham Wheels Park since the 1980s. In my early days I would walk from Duddeston station, through a pretty deprived part of the city, to get there. The raceway was like a ray of light in a dark dystopian landscape. It was a safe space.

In recent years, PRI, under the leadership of Pete Gould, provided weekly racing featuring an eclectic mix of half a dozen or so of the lesser-profile oval racing formulas. This was club motorsport for the masses. Much like on the circuits, crowds weren't in abundance, but the pits were always packed.

On my last visit to the track in October, there were 150 competitors. Many of the formulas were for the younger members of the racing family. As I walked round the pits, there was a group of Micro F2 kids playing football, Ninja Kart kids were excitedly telling tales of recent racing exploits. Fun and laughter was heard among the sound of industry as cars were being coaxed back into life and maintained.

At race time, the youngsters turn into speed demons, showing the impeccable racecraft that they have all picked up from the absolute earliest age. They then stop, climb out and grab a bag of Haribo Starmix. You cannot fail to be impressed.

BriSCA Formula 2 stockcars was one of the categories that thrived on the Birmingham Wheels oval

A lot of these formulas are going to struggle to fill their calendars following the closure of Birmingham and there is certainly no existing realistic alternative near the area. An available Tarmac oval of Birmingham dimensions just does not exist.

Birmingham Wheels has much more to offer than 'just' the oval racing, in fact the park was more vibrant at the time of its closure than at almost any point in its history. There was a drifting arena, karting track, speed skating oval, rally driving course, while the oval itself hosted corporate stockcar events, testing days as well as weekly oval racing events. The park was in almost constant use.

Short ovals, karting, drifting, they all directly have a huge impact on the higher levels of motorsport, which is perhaps not always appreciated.

I am a regular at circuit racing as well as at the ovals and the entry lists for a typical British Automobile Racing Club, 750 Motor Club or British Racing and Sports Car Club meeting feature a huge number of names that I recognise from having graduated from the ovals. Some of them go on much further than that too – Le Mans winner Nick Tandy perhaps the highest profile name in recent years.

Anything at a traditional circuit has quite an inherent cost from the outset, it is not a realistic starting point for many. Truly budget motorsport on the circuits does not really exist. Birmingham Wheels is budget motorsport. You can buy a race car for a few hundred pounds, pay £30 and go testing. You can enter a race meeting for another £30. There is no better way to dip your toe into the motorsport waters.

Meanwhile hundreds of motorsport businesses will tell you that a huge part of their sales come from oval racers, any threat to them is a threat to many livelihoods.

The Friends of Birmingham Wheels campaign group, fronted by former Incarace promoter Mark Bond, is determined to not go down without a fight. The story behind the closure is quite a long and complicated story, with many believing that it is unconstitutional.

Backing from a big name in motorsport could make all the difference. Lewis Hamilton himself was known to have raced on the kart track there.

The park has so much to offer the people of the Midlands. If it is lost, then it is not only a tragedy for those in the local area, but for the motorsport community as a whole.

● *Fans are urged to join the 'Friends of Birmingham Wheels' group to keep up to date with their efforts to save Wheels from the bulldozers. Visit birminghamwheels.co.uk for details.*

Younger racers get their first taste in Ninja Karts

Fans enjoyed the charm of the oval race venue

"Birmingham Wheels Raceway offers what is truly budget motorsport"

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REVIEW

KRISTOFFERSSON'S FOURTH LEAVES HIM SPEECHLESS

Hal Ridge looks back on a tense fight for global honours

Kristoffersson proved that it wasn't just about the car...

The Swede clawed back ground over the latter part of the season

The two main protagonists in the 2019 World RX Championship, Timmy Hansen and Andreas Bakkerud, finished level on points at the end of the campaign. Back then, the advantage swung in Hansen's favour on wins countback, but it was almost unthinkable that the scenario could or would happen again.

But this year, in a thrilling finale, it did. With Hansen and Swedish compatriot Johan Kristoffersson tied on points at the end of the year, this time Hansen lost out and Kristoffersson claimed his fourth World crown by virtue of more wins.

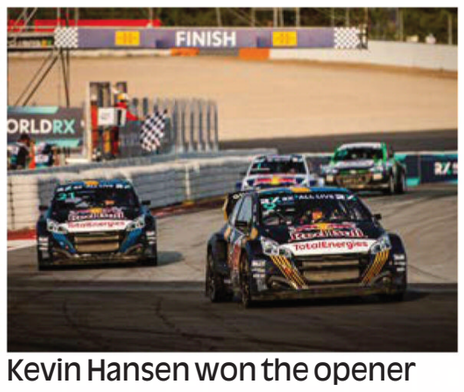
World RX might not have had the same level of entries as in the past – the series holding its final year of internal combustion-engine competition at the highest level before it switches to all-electric cars next year – but the battle for fastest times and the level at the front of the order remained fierce.

The championship outcome was a significant turnaround to how the start of the campaign had unfolded for Kristoffersson, who delivered a perfect example of never giving up and the need to fight for every point on offer at every stage of a campaign.

While Hansen took second in round one behind brother and team-mate Kevin Hansen and then won in Sweden and France, Kristoffersson hit a series of issues. Having signed for the EKS JC team to drive a Mattias Ekstrom-owned Audi S1 (not the works-built Volkswagen Polo he had raced to his previous three crowns) Kristoffersson set the fastest time in the very first session of the year in Spain. However, when the FIA data logger was found to have been unplugged in that Q1 race – which turned out to be a genuine mistake – he was later removed from that session's results.

Fastest in all of the other qualifiers, third in Barcelona was the best he could salvage. He then traded fastest times with Timmy Hansen in Sweden but suffered a double puncture in the semi-finals on the right-hand side of the Audi and was forced to stop.

In France, he took his first top qualifier position of the year but dropped out of the lead of semi-finals with a broken driveshaft. By holding onto third spot in that race, he maintained a final place. Despite the EKS JC squad making a heroic effort to change the gearbox between the semi and final, in around 12 minutes, they just missed the final pre-grid closing by 40 seconds.



Kevin Hansen won the opener

By the Latvian double-header for rounds four and five, Kristoffersson was bemoaning the use of the word "fightback" when he was quizzed about his campaign.

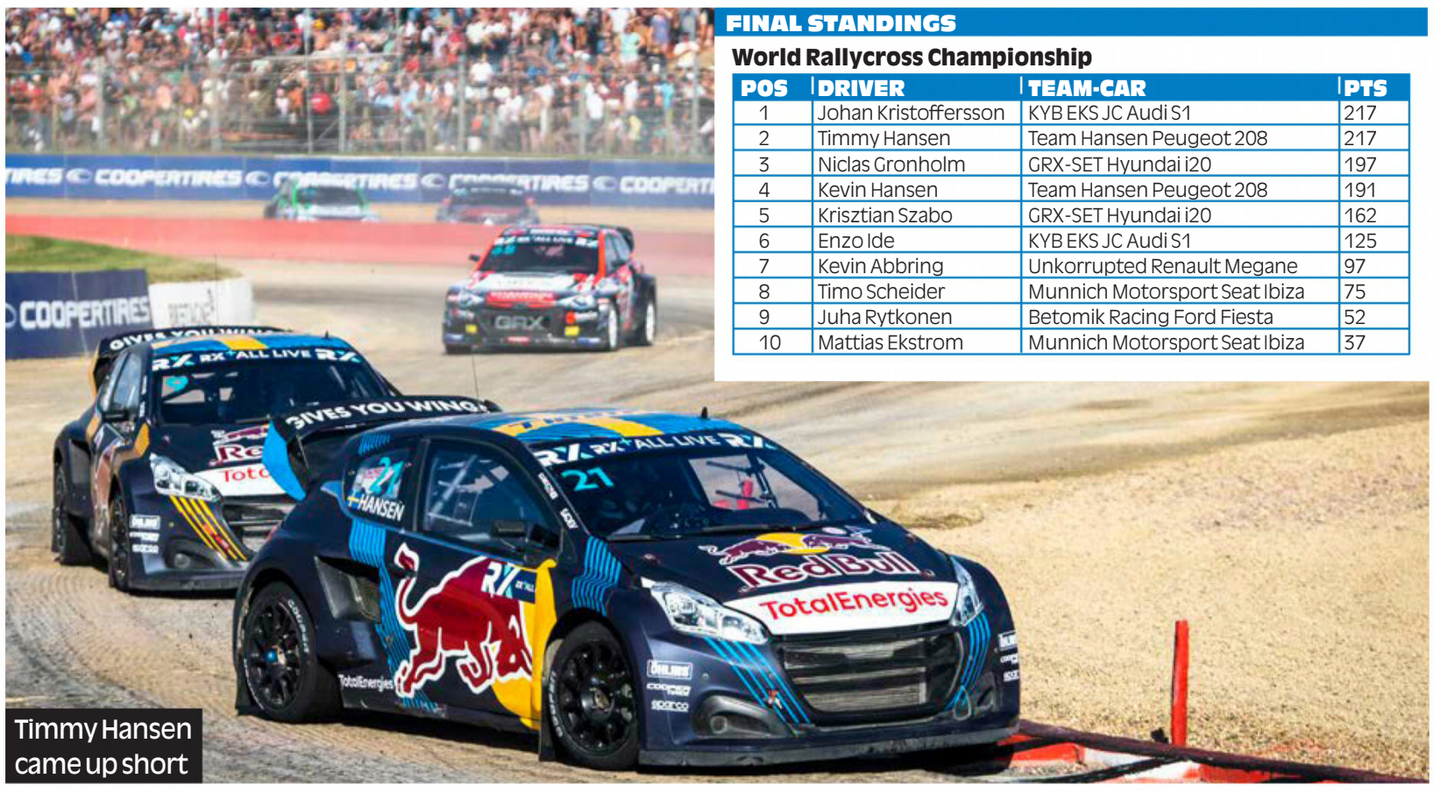
For a man who could do no wrong en route to some of his previous successes, notably when he won 11 of 12 rounds in 2018, the 2021 campaign was not panning out as he planned or expected.

Historically, the Hansen Peugeots had been strong on the more abrasive, higher-grip circuits like in France and Latvia, but weaker when traction was at a premium. The outfit turned the tables on that for 2021 but, in doing so, ultimately sacrificed some high-grip pace. In Latvia, although they took three podiums in the two rounds between them, the Hansen brothers didn't have the pace to challenge at the front.

Meanwhile, having scored a podium in France, putting miserable Spanish and Swedish rounds behind him, Finn Niclas Gronholm ran Kristoffersson closest in Riga, and claimed a first win of the year

'The battle at the front remained fierce all year long'

Photos: Red Bull Content Pool



Timmy Hansen came up short

FINAL STANDINGS

World Rallycross Championship

POS	DRIVER	TEAM-CAR	PTS
1	Johan Kristoffersson	KYB EKS JC Audi S1	217
2	Timmy Hansen	Team Hansen Peugeot 208	217
3	Niclas Gronholm	GRX-SET Hyundai i20	197
4	Kevin Hansen	Team Hansen Peugeot 208	191
5	Krisztian Szabo	GRX-SET Hyundai i20	162
6	Enzo Ide	KYB EKS JC Audi S1	125
7	Kevin Abbring	Unkorrupted Renault Megane	97
8	Timo Scheider	Munnich Motorsport Seat Ibiza	75
9	Juha Rytkonen	Betomik Racing Ford Fiesta	52
10	Mattias Ekstrom	Munnich Motorsport Seat Ibiza	37

Bakkerud leads the line with Euro glory

The first ever FIA-sanctioned electric rallycross category, RX2e, was top of the World RX support bill in 2021. While the new series can be considered a success, it was Norwegian Andreas Bakkerud who stole the headlines and ultimately claimed the European Rallycross Championship for RX1 (Supercar) title in a final-round decider.

Bakkerud didn't have a full-season plan at the start of the year, having split with the RX Cartel outfit, for whom he'd driven in World RX for the previous two seasons. Taking a step back from World RX, he was entered as a one-off in the first Euro RX round in Sweden by ES Motorsport in its Skoda Fabia and finished on the podium.

He then found a way to enter each of the subsequent four rounds, always late, and often with another driver giving up their entry for him to be able to compete. Poor fortune in France and Latvia while being the fastest RX1, made the seven-time World RX race winner's life hard. But, in the final-round showdown at Spa, Bakkerud started alongside title rival Fabien Pailler on the front row of the grid for the final and it was the fan-favourite Norwegian who prevailed.

Pailler impressed throughout the campaign and also had his share of misfortune, just falling short of the crown, while ES Motorsport's Janis Baumanis was third overall in the points.

Having dominated the RX2e season-opener in Spain, it looked as if Guillaume De Ridder would canter away with the electric spoils, but as the season went on the level in the class increased and that too went down to the wire.

Finn Jesse Kallio won in Sweden and later threw the kitchen sink at trying to overhaul Belgian De Ridder at the Nurburgring finale, but just lost out. By virtue of claimed a maiden podium in that final round, Spaniard Pablo Suarez just pipped British driver Patrick O'Donovan to third overall in the class. The 17-year-old O'Donovan has impressed through the year.

Russian driver Yuri Belevskiy also won the RX3 title at the class finale in Portugal. Despite the efforts of team-mate and newcomer Kobe Pauwels, who won in France, Belevskiy won everywhere else to secure top honours.

Bakkerud stood out

De Ridder: electric king

after Kristoffersson went off following first-corner contact between the pair in the final.

Gronholm would ultimately win on three occasions, adding victories in Portugal and Germany to his tally and while he unquestionably had the pace to win outright, his latter two victories were in part thanks to the title contenders becoming embroiled in battle. Kristoffersson had won on day two in Latvia and then again in Belgium to slice into Hansen's points margin but, in Portugal on Montalegre's low-grip surface, the Hansen brothers claimed each of the fastest times. That wasn't converted into victory however.

In the final, running behind Timmy Hansen for the lead, Kristoffersson knew that he couldn't afford to let Hansen get away and take the points for winning. In the kind of calculated manner that he had become so famous for, Kristoffersson pressed the rear of Hansen's Peugeot throughout the final, with Kevin Hansen just behind.

That battling ultimately let Gronholm joker early and when the leaders took their extra route, the Finn came out on front. Cutting a course marker in the final corners while battling with Kevin Hansen wasn't in Kristoffersson's plan however, and he was handed five-second penalty, dropping to sixth in the race and 17-points off leader Timmy Hansen.

Penalties would play a significant role in the final weekend double-header at a snow-covered Nurburgring too. Having qualified fourth overall, enough to mitigate points loss to Kristoffersson, Hansen was handed a five-second penalty for a pass on Kristoffersson's team-mate Enzo Ide in Turn 2 during the semi-finals.

Starting from the rear of the final grid, he made a move up the inside while Ide dived down the middle of the pack. Gronholm was collateral damage from the concertina effect and was forced wide at Turn 1, while Kristoffersson took the lead.

Hansen and Ide were later disqualified. With the standings gap down to just four, Kristoffersson took another point back in qualifying on the final day of the season and when Hansen was handed a seven-second penalty for Turn 1 contact in the semi-finals with Gronholm it dropped him to the back of the grid.

Everything appeared to be falling apart for Hansen and it had come down to a scenario of whichever title-contender finished in front of the other over the last six laps of the campaign would emerge on top.

Ultimately Gronholm ran out front after the opening lap to claim his third win but behind, Timmy Hansen followed Kristoffersson into the joker for the first time of asking in challenging wet and muddy conditions .The Audi driver was left to deal with a Hansen sandwich on track until Kevin Hansen jokered late on, and it was Kristoffersson who came out on top.

One of the most quick-witted characters in the World RX paddock, even Kristoffersson was short of words after the finale.

Outside of the title battle, although still within a theoretical chance until the final weekend, Krisztian Szabo had a strong season and only once didn't start in the final, while Mattias Ekstrom returned for a one-off outing with Rene Munnich's All-Inkl squad and once again proved his class. Ekstrom helped to improve the team's Seat Ibiza and pushed along team-mate Timo Scheider too, on a different weekend, that effort may have been rewarded with a trophy.

British Rallycross champion Ollie O'Donovan contested five rounds to see out the ICE era, and finished equal on points with Ekstrom, with a 10th-place spot in the standings. ■

Dramas for Niclas Gronholm (r) and Enzo Ide (c) at the Nurburgring

MN'S TOP 6 DRIVERS OF THE YEAR

1 Johan Kristoffersson

Car: Audi S1
Team: KYB EKS JC
Points: 217 (1st)

Proving the doubters wrong that his previous titles were purely down to equipment underneath him, and despite being dogged with poor fortune early in the season, Kristoffersson never gave up. He was often the fastest and scooped his fourth World crown from a 17-point deficit heading into the finale.

2 Timmy Hansen

Car: Peugeot 208
Team: Hansen World RX Team
Points: 217 (2nd)

Until the final double-header of the year in Germany, Hansen had only been off the podium once all season, showing both the pace and consistency needed to claim World titles, including swapping tenths of a second with Kristoffersson to be fastest, notably in Sweden. But his year unravelled in the final weekend and he just lost out on adding a second career World title.

3 Kevin Abbring

Car: Renault Megane R.S.
Team: Unkorrupted
Points: 97 (7th)

Although Dutchman Abbring didn't complete the season with the GCK-owned Renault Megane, his performances in Sweden and Belgium left a lasting impression. Third at Holjes could have been a victory had he not been held up in traffic, while in Spa he was spun out of the semi-final lead while comfortably out front on pace.

4 Yuri Belevskiy

Car: Audi S1
Team: Volland Racing KFT
Points: 36 (12th)

The RX3 champion made his World RX debut in the final weekend for internal combustion engine Supercars in Germany and delivered an incredible performance in the first of the two rounds. He claimed third on merit, and then stepped up to second when penalties for others were applied. Up there with the best-ever World RX debuts.

5 Niclas Gronholm

Car: Hyundai i20
Team: GRX-SET World RX Team
Points: 197 (3rd)

Gronholm could and probably should be higher in this list, and had it not been for a poor pair of opening rounds once again he would have been in the title-fight. Three wins, equal to Kristoffersson, was impressive. He has the pace to be a World champion, he just needs the consistency to go with it.

6 Kevin Hansen

Car: Peugeot 208
Team: Hansen World RX Team
Points: 191 (4th)

Won in Spain and stood on the podium for all but two rounds. But ultimately, while not always faster, brother Timmy was a little more consistent when it mattered. The younger Hansen also several times sacrificed his own race for his sibling, and was in the title hunt until the end, but lost out on a top three with a stall in round eight's semi-final.

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

RALLYING AND THE STORM

Bob Bean had a very long wait...

Paul Lawrence looks back on a remarkable rally that tested drivers – and journalists too – to their limits

Competitors, marshals and some spectators had to be 'cut out'...

The Roger Albert Clark Rally is designed to be a challenge. Long days, tough stages and a unique atmosphere make it one of the highlights of UK special stage rallying.

But the 2021 edition took the challenge to a new level as Storm Arwen did its best to wreak havoc.

Everyone who was on the 2010 Roger Albert will have clear memories of the incredible event that ran in the year of the snow. The 2021 rally will go down in history as the year of the blow.

As ever, rally manager Colin Heppenstall pulled off the seemingly impossible by organising a five-day, 31-stage, 320-stage mile epic across England, Scotland and Wales, Only the ongoing impact of Covid on European entries reduced the capacity entry of 150 cars, but 139 cars went over the start in Carlisle on Thursday afternoon.

Everything went well through Friday as crews tackled a daunting 105 competitive miles in the central block of Kielder Forest.

However, as the light faded and the snow began, the arrival of Storm Arwen was to have a dramatic impact on the event. Having monitored worsening conditions Heppenstall called a halt to the rally on Friday evening (see sidebar) but later running crews and officials faced a rapidly increasing challenge getting back to the Carlisle base.

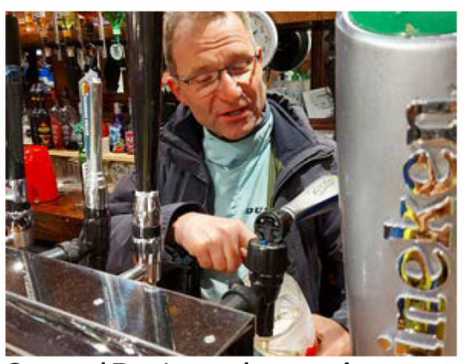
By around 2100hrs, all roads out of Kielder were blocked by fallen trees and the planned rally route back to Carlisle was blocked by a big tree that was down across the road just north of Kielder village, close to the start of the Bewshaugh stage. The snow, which had fallen heavily as the wind got up, didn't really get much worse but fallen trees were a huge problem that was not limited to the smaller roads. The main A7 trunk road from Carlisle to Edinburgh was blocked either side of the border town of Langholm and it was in Langholm that as many as 30 crews and some officials realised that they were going no further on Friday night. Though not on rally route, Langholm was where they ended up as they exhausted attempts to find a way out.

To the enormous credit of the management and staff, the Crown Inn in Langholm opened its doors and offered food, drink and shelter to at least 50 rally people. Bar trade was brisk before sleep was attempted. However, in many ways they were the lucky ones, as a few crews and officials spent an uneasy night in the car. By 0900hrs on Saturday, the key routes were open again, but it was the middle of the day before the final officials escaped the forest.

Among those with a big tale to tell were rallying veterans Bob Bean, 83, and Captain Thompson, 70. They had punctured in Bewshaugh and slid their Lotus Cortina off into a big ditch, which they only escaped with recovery three hours later. By now, roads out of Kielder were blocked and they were short of fuel having missed the planned meet with their management vehicle. The fuel ran out in the early hours, and it was 0730hrs before a farmer came by and offered a jerry can of fuel. "We didn't panic, but it was a cold night," said Thompson. "The main road through Kielder was like a scene from a Spielberg blockbuster with the amount of debris. It was exciting… afterwards!"

Among the crews stuck in Langholm was Top Gear presenter Chris Harris and co-driver Bryn Pierce, tackling the Open Rally in a non-historic Ford Escort Mk2.

> **"We didn't panic - but it was a cold night"**
>
> **Captain Thompson**



Conrad Bos's work experience

Photos: John Moon, Ben Lawrence, Paul Lawrence

It was a eye-opener for Top Gear's Chris Harris

No storm, but an ice-hit Dyfnant still ran

"Friday evening felt like a Top Gear challenge that went catastrophically wrong, but the rally spirit has been incredible, and people helped us so much," said Harris, who impressed many with his approach to the event and speed on the stages. "The stages on Friday when the sun was shining were as good as I've experienced in terms of driving of any sort. It was an utter privilege and I just feel so lucky to have been on this event. It was the most fantastic experience."

Another driver new to the event was Lotus Elan racer Conrad Bos, a veteran of just two gravel rallies in his Pinto-engined Ford Escort Mk2 before the start of the Roger Albert Clark. With fellow racers Adam Cunnington and John Moon in his support crew, this was way outside any established comfort zone, but Bos showed his versatility by helping behind the bar at the Crown Inn.

They regrouped on Saturday morning and rejoined in Wales, only to retire at final service on Monday when the Escort resolutely refused to fire. They loved the whole adventure and 10 laps at Snetterton will not be such a big deal anymore.

Hemingway: slow and steady

Dave Hemingway and Simon Ashton are members of a very small club, having started and finished all 14 Roger Alberts in their Open category Escort Mk2. Fumes from the newly painted car once it got hot made Ashton feel groggy, but they had bigger issues on Friday night with an epic tale of getting back to Carlisle, possibly as the final car to do so.

"We adopted the same pedestrian pace of the previous night and decided that a night in the hotel would be much more productive than a night in a Falstone ditch," said Hemingway of Friday's penultimate stage. "Bewshaugh 2 was worse. The driving snow which made it difficult to see was almost non-existent in the trees, so you could push on only to be met by a wall of snow as you exited the trees. To make it worse, we had to crash over two fallen trees which were completely blocking the stage. We exited safely but may possibly be the last crew to finish the stage as the two trees we jumped were quickly being joined by many others."

The road through Newcastleton was blocked so they headed north into Scotland. "We descended to the deserted A7 which looked ominous, but we continued through Langholm and out the other side where we were met by an artic lorry reversing up the road. A tree with a two-foot thick trunk was laying across the road at shoulder height, supported by two collapsed walls. We headed west for the M74, but the route was blocked so a south-westerly route was plotted. An upturned sheep shed in the road was lifted out of the way and plonked over the wall by a farmer driving a telehandler. On arrival in Carlisle, we were told that we were the first car into the control for over an hour and I'm not sure that any made it back after us either. We abandoned the car in service and beat a retreat to the hotel!"

By around 1000hrs on Saturday, everyone was either back at Carlisle or accounted for and Heppenstall confirmed that Saturday's leg was cancelled. Privately, he had concern that the whole rally would have to be called off, but better news soon arrived from Wales.

During Saturday, local volunteers had concentrated on clearing the Dyfi stage and the adjoining Gartheiniog stage was cancelled to consolidate resources. Dyfnant, meanwhile, was clear of trees but, even in the daylight of Sunday afternoon, harboured patches of snow and ice on the higher stretches just to keep up the challenge. Crews later reported that the second run through Dyfi on Sunday evening was treacherously icy.

All of that made Monday's leg of five stages pretty straightforward with only some ice on the opening Walters Arena stage to keep everyone on their toes. Remarkably, 100 of the 139 starters made the finish in Carmarthen after a rally that no-one will forget. Just as he had in 2010, Colin Heppenstall had pulled a rabbit out of a hat to keep the event running. The night that Storm Arwen hit Kielder will go down in rallying folklore. ■

AN ORGANISER'S NIGHTMARE: THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

Rally manager Colin Heppenstall faced some tough decisions when Storm Arwen hit. This is his view of a truly challenging 24 hours and his story of an epic event.

Heppenstall: rapid rethink

"On Friday at 1500hrs the skies were blue and clear and there was no wind. But by early evening the conditions were coming in and getting worse. Snow started to fall, it was getting colder, and the wind was reasonable as we went into the final stage of the day. Then we could hear that the wind was getting up to the level where there was a possibility of trees coming down.

"In consultation with Forestry England, who were with me all the time, I made the decision to stop the event because we could tell the wind was now at a dangerous level. We stopped the final Bewshaugh stage with about 10 cars left to go into the stage.

"What happened next happened very quickly. Within two or three minutes the stage was blocked in multiple locations with trees that had fallen. We then launched red flags to stop all the cars and opened all the forest gates just to get everybody, the crews, the marshals and the spectators, out of the forests as quickly as possible and back onto the public highway.

"Eventually, every road out of Kielder was blocked with trees. Even we were blocked in Kielder, and we had to cut our way out. The Crown Inn in Langholm did a wonderful job looking after some of our competitors and I really thank them for that. But then Saturday morning was calm and the weather was gorgeous. There was no wind and nobody would believe we'd had the night before that we'd had.

"We couldn't get into any of the Saturday stages in Scotland as far too many trees were down across all four stages and the access roads. The only option we had was to follow our major incident plan, which we had done the night before, and we followed it through on Saturday morning to make sure that the health and safety of everybody was paramount: not only the competitors, but the marshals and the spectators as well.

"Most of the time, we know where the competitors are and we know where the marshals are, but we haven't a clue where the spectators are. And we found out on Saturday morning that some spectators had gone into the Greskine on Friday night and had got blocked in there. So, they had to be cut out on Saturday morning. We ask people not to go into the forest the night before and it's for these reasons, we don't do it lightly.

"So, we had to cancel the Saturday stages and we then started looking at what we were going to do in Wales. By 1100hrs on Saturday we had a call from the stage commander to say the Dyfnant stage was all open and clear. At least we had a start for the rest of the event."

Langholm watering hole was a welcome relief for competitors

Even the best-laid plans can be scuppered when trees fall down...

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

PERRY McCARTHY: FLAT CHAT WITH FLAT OUT, FLAT BROKE

He made it to Formula 1, just – and maintained a sense of humour throughout. By Matt James

Flying the flag with a smile: McCarthy

Nothing seems to be able to get Perry McCarthy down and there have been so many blows which might have floored a lesser character.

He was one of the stand-out single-seater talents of Britain's golden generation – dubbed the Rat Pack – in the late 1980s, clawed his way through a bit-part Formula 3000 career and made it to the top table in Formula 1 in 1992 with the shockingly bad Andrea Moda team.

It was yet another false dawn for the Essex man that left him penniless and served to derail his top-flight career. He took a step back, reset, and then embarked on a sportscar career which took him to Le Mans in a factory Audi.

After penning his best-selling book, Flat Out, Flat Broke, he embarked on the next stage of his career as The Stig on BBC's Top Gear programme. It brought worldwide notoriety, but in typical McCarthy style, it was a role he was unable to exploit due to the secret nature of the character he was playing.

He has now forged a successful career as a speaker giving business and motivational talks. He builds on the lessons that the rich tapestry of his career have provided for him. McCarthy kindly took time out of his schedule to tackle another testing subject: the Motorsport News readers' questions.

Question: How come you didn't take part in karting like most of your contemporaries did?
Jonathan Astbury
Via email
MN: And where did the spark of motor racing interest ignite in you?
Perry McCarthy: "I really didn't take a lot of interest in motor racing when I was younger. I knew some bloke called James Hunt had won the World championship in 1976, but that was about it. However, I always liked cars.

"When I went to college, there was a friend of mine who was seriously into motor racing and he used to bring in this magazine called Grand Prix International. I was studying law, economics and art. Normally, I was used to drawing portraits but then I started drawing racing cars and reading all about them and the drivers.

"In the meantime, my hobby of driving on the road was getting me noticed by an awful lot of people, including the Essex Police. I felt that my road driving was good, because I was rubbish at football, cricket, rugby, etc.

"It was only there where my motor racing passion excited, there in the late 1970s. I didn't miss out any karting steps because I simply didn't know it existed. Then a combination of things happened. I play a little bit of keyboards, and I had a part-time job in a friend's music shop

Photos: Perry McCarthy, Motorsport Images

Making an impact: Formula Ford at Oulton in 1984. Perry was uninjured

demonstrating these things. That shop owner friend was a fan of my driving too.

"Unbeknown to me, he had arranged a meeting with the chief instructor of Brands Hatch's racing school, Les Ager. Les came into the shop and said he had heard about my driving and he took me to Brands Hatch.

"There I was, Jack the Lad, and got in the car to show him what I could do and to show him exactly how brilliant I was. I nearly threw us off that first time. It was quite daunting. Brands Hatch seemed to me like a Roman Colosseum, being on this track. I just had this sense of awe.

"Then Les jumped in the car – and take into account he must have been about 60 years old at the time – and I thought he had lost his mind. He was putting the car at all sorts of angles, he was so fast and smooth and he was able to do it while talking at the same time. I thought it must have been some kind of payback for all the passengers who had been in a road car with me up to that point.

"I was in sponge mode, learning all I could, and then he asked me to get back in and I pretty much replicated exactly what he had done with a couple of extra bits. He dragged me out of the car afterwards and told me 'you have to be a racing driver'. He had been there for a really long time and he said that I was the best he had ever seen. That suited me down to the ground. There and then, I made the decision that I wanted to be a racing driver.

"Sometimes, I think that motor racing is about personality quirks and if they fit with the demands of the job. Ever since I was a kid, I had a lot of determination, focus and I could provide a lot of attention. I had those characteristics, and they are what you need to succeed as a racing driver as well."

MN: And you needed determination to get your career off the ground in Formula Ford 1600. You didn't have deep pockets…

PM: "Once I had made the decision to be a racing driver, Les Ager then introduced me to John and Angela Webb, the bosses of Brands Hatch. He called Van Diemen and Minister Racing Engines and things started to be talked about. No matter what the deal was or the belief they had in Les' opinion, they needed some money.

"I had been at college, but then I decided to take advantage of a job offer to go out and work on North Sea oil rigs. I spent two years there just to get the money together to fund this ambition of going motor racing. I had started researching what was needed. By then, I knew about karting but it was too late. It had to be straight into Formula Ford."

MN: That is a long time to keep the passion and belief going, when you hadn't really yet done any motor racing…

PM: "The North Sea certainly isn't the most user-friendly environment I have happened across! There were some times where it was quite difficult and tough, but I also knew in the back of my mind that wherever I went in the future, I was having an incredible life experience. There were no excuses there, you just had to get on and do the job whatever the conditions. I guess that is there I developed my own motto of 'whatever it takes'."

MN sets the scene: As Perry McCarthy was making his way through the junior single-seater ranks and through to Formula 3, there was a glut of British

continued on page 22

A two-year stint working on the oil rigs in the North Sea helped McCarthy fund his racing ambitions

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

Full of optimism: ready to tackle British F3 in 1987

talent and a group of five racers became very close – Julian Bailey, Mark Blundell, Johnny Herbert, Damon Hill and McCarthy. They still regularly meet up to this day.

Question: How come the Rat Pack all gelled so well? These days, a group of drivers like that would be at each other's throats?

Ben Thompson
Via email

PM: "I guess I am a fairly outgoing personality. I am not trying to take the credit here, but I would often make opportunities for us all to be together and have some fun. I think we were all on the same journey. We had some similar problems and we just got on and the more that went on, the closer we all got. Fortunately, there weren't too many outright collisions between us. Having said that, I do remember one incident when Martin Donnelly and Julian Bailey got together at Paddock Hill Bend at Brands Hatch. That ended in a punch. I think it was Julian that threw the punch, and that was a bad idea. When they got back to the paddock, I think [Van Diemen engineer] Micky Galter went and found Julian and gave him what for…you don't want to mess around with Micky too much, from what I remember…"

MN It is great that you have all been a part of each other's journey…

PM: "It is great, and many of our kids now know each other. Our kids know Damon's kids and Julian's. It is a really nice story and there appears to be a lot of respect and affection between all of us.

"We had a golden generation, and when you add in the other drivers that were around at the same time too – people like Bertrand Gachot and Gary Brabham and a few others – there were about eight or nine of us from that period, particularly in 1987, who made it on to Formula 1, which is an incredible strike rate. It is insane. We all knew that the time that there was a lot of depth of talent knocking about."

MN sets the scene: McCarthy's graduation from British Formula 3 to Formula 3000 in 1988 didn't come easy and he was forced to scrape around for deals.

Question: Did you think your shot had gone when you got to Formula 3000? It was very hand-to-mouth…

Nigel Salisbury
Via email

PM: "I didn't think my shot had gone at all, but I knew my house had! I had come from two funded years in Formula 3 – although sadly we had the wrong type of bloody engine – and then sadly there was the economic crash at the end of 1987. My loyal sponsors just couldn't do it.

"In the background I had renovated a flat that we had and I had sold that for a very good profit and then I bought a much bigger house and renovated that. I was able to draw down on the equity from that second property.

"I did a deal with [Ralt boss] Ron Tauranac. This was at a time when nobody was qualifying the Ralt F3000 car. I think Eric Bernard had got an incredible result right at the beginning of the year [fourth at Pau], but every other team seemed to get better and they were getting worse. The Reynards and Lolas were coming on strong and drivers were leaving the Ralt programme throughout the year, so there was a chance for me. It was still going to cost some money though.

"I did a deal with Ron for £30,000 for the last three races of the year and that was a large chunk of the equity of my house. I managed to get it onto the grid for the last three races of the year and I was battling for top 10s, things like that.

"Sadly, there are an awful lot of occasions when you can't win in motor racing. But you *can* win: it is not necessarily about standing on the podium and collecting the silverware, it is about, in adverse situations, showing that you *won't* quit. If you strangle every last ounce of performance out of a car that others can't find, then that is a personal win.

"There was a situation with myself and Cor Euser, who was my team-mate at Ralt. Cor had come in highly rated and Alan Howell [Ralt team manager] goaded me and told me that the sister car would be driven by someone really strong. I thought 'right, I will show you'. I was so annoyed and at our first test on the Bugatti circuit at Le Mans – bear in mind I was in this Ralt that hadn't been qualifying for races – I went out and was fastest overall.

"Suddenly the Ralt team took notice. We had a situation at Zolder where I was about one second a lap faster than Cor, and he didn't like it. He demanded to get in my car and went even slower! Don't get me wrong, Cor is a lovely bloke and his range of ability to drive anything quickly across any discipline is probably unmatched, but I had proved that my level of focus and my ability could drag a lap time out of that chassis like no other.

"You have to have that confidence because if you don't feel like you are something a bit special, then why put yourself through all this in the first place? My attitude was that if I could show people that I wasn't just qualifying that Ralt but dragging everything I could out of it, then that would get me noticed. There was no way I was at the front with the likes of Jean Alesi – it just couldn't be done – but I could really wave a flag for myself and get noticed.

"And that worked. Without me knowing, at the end of the season, Ron Tauranac went to see Ken Tyrrell. Ron told Ken that he had to sign me. Then Ken had me in and he said that although he was full for drivers, he wanted me to stay in touch. For me, that was incredible recognition: I had no money and I was in

"You have to prove you can get everything from the car"

Perry McCarthy

Battling in the top 10 was an achievement in the Ralt during 1988

Perry was all smiles despite a tough racing career

McCarthy says the Cowman-run Lola was one of his favourite cars

The giant-killing Spice programme was enjoyable in the 1990 season

McCarthy was genuinely scared after Monaco qualifying run in 1992

The lesser-spotted Andrea Moda in motion: it was a dead end for Perry

debt and I was struggling even to get to races, let alone anything else. Those moments give you a beacon, shining out and telling you are not deluded and other people believe in you. If gives you the hope that maybe you can do this."

MN: Was that the only conversation that you had with Ken?

PM: "Well, I stayed in touch, like he asked! Jumping forward a few years, my first appearance in Formula 1 was with Andrea Moda in 1992. I was in our little pitbox getting ready and then all of a sudden, who was stood at the front of the pitbox just looking in with his arms open and a big smile? It was Ken. That meant the absolute world to me and I went out and just gave him a big hug. There was this legend of motor racing and he had made the effort to come down to our end of the pits to welcome me to Formula 1. It was a mark of the man, and all these little things mean so much to me."

Questions: You did some races in a Spice in the USA [in IMSA GT Lights in 1990]. What was the most extreme track you raced in your career?
Steven Nye
Via email

PM: "Quite a lot of the tracks in America are extreme! I really like the tracks out there because they weren't full of chicanes to slow down a high-speed corner and there weren't giant run-off areas where you would need to refuel just to get back to the Tarmac if you went off.

"It was extreme, that is the right word. The track that stood out for me was Road Atlanta. It took your breath away and I knew that there were some areas on that track that if you got it wrong, you knew it could be very unpleasant. I had the lap record at Road Atlanta. I like that jeopardy though."

Question: I know you went from FF1600 to World sportscars (best not mention Formula 1), but which car gave you the most enjoyment?
Ian Temple
Via Facebook

PM: "That is a good question. I had a lot of super times with the Spice in America because we were in giant-killing mode. Our budget was $300,000 and we were up against the works teams from Toyota, Nissan and Jaguar, and they were spending between $10 to $20 million. To put it on pole out there and to lead a lot of races was great.

"Having said that, my real complete love was single-seaters, and I guess my favourite would have been Roger Cowman's Lola Formula 3000 car, which I raced in 1989. We managed to do three races on shirt buttons, never mind a few pennies! I managed to get that hooked up in the rain a couple times and that was really satisfying. We had no testing and it was being run out of Roger's back garden. I was fighting with Jean Alesi for pole at Spa, and I was two corners away from finishing in the points there – and that was when they were only down to sixth place."

MN sets the scene: Andrea Moda is nothing but a footnote in Formula 1 history and has often been cited as the worst team to enter the top-flight. The car appeared in 1992 and was McCarthy's shot at the big time. On his debut in Spain, he didn't make it out of the pitlane before the car broke. Things would only get worse, and McCarthy walked away from the team before the year was done.

Question: Would the Andrea Moda F1 car have been a decent car to driver had it been more thoughtfully put together in the first place?
Dave Goddard
Via Facebook

PM: "I know where the question is going. I think what Dave means to say is if it had been run properly and had there been the right people in involved with the programme to tuned it and make some developments, would it have been decent?

"The car was a two-year-old design even by the time we eventually got it out there. We were using a customer Judd V10 engine, which wasn't the absolute best engine in the world. But you have to remember there were some other scallywags at the back then as well. Larrousse wasn't having such a good time and Brabham was in trouble at that time too. So I do believe that if Andrea Moda had have been run better, then we may have had a shot at qualifying for two or three races.

"The race that my team-mate Roberto Moreno qualified for at Monaco was nothing to do with the team or the car, that was all down to Roberto. Forget my single lap, but there were a number of drivers who were new to F1 that year and who were at the back of the grid. This was before simulators and digital training and things like that. A few of those guys were under-performing because of the intricacies of Monaco. Roberto, on the other hand, knew it back to front. He was able to use all his experience to drag the car around before the others realised their potential.

"What Roberto needed was the car to keep going, and that is what happened – for a change. We do know that if the one-hour session had been another two or three minute longer, he probably wouldn't have got into the race because the others were beginning to close in on his time.

"At Monaco for me, there was no windshield, the seat hadn't been properly made for me and, as with all drivers, you have moments in your life when there is some fear but you have to contain that fear. With what was ahead of me at Monaco, having never seen the place and trying to drag the car around with just one lap, I actually did manage to scare myself. Even by that stage, I had pretty much no trust in the car and when I look back to what I was trying to do there, it was actually a bit stupid – I could have ended up folding myself in half there…

"Going back to the original question, I think there would have been potential for us both to qualify for at least a couple of races had it been operated in a different way."

MN: It reached its lowest point when you tried to qualify in Belgium, didn't it?

PM: "It was stupid and when you look back over any career, there are moments when it could have been 'night night', and that was my biggest one.

"So we were at Spa, and by that stage the Brabham team had folded so there was no need for prequalifying –we were straight in to the practice sessions. I had

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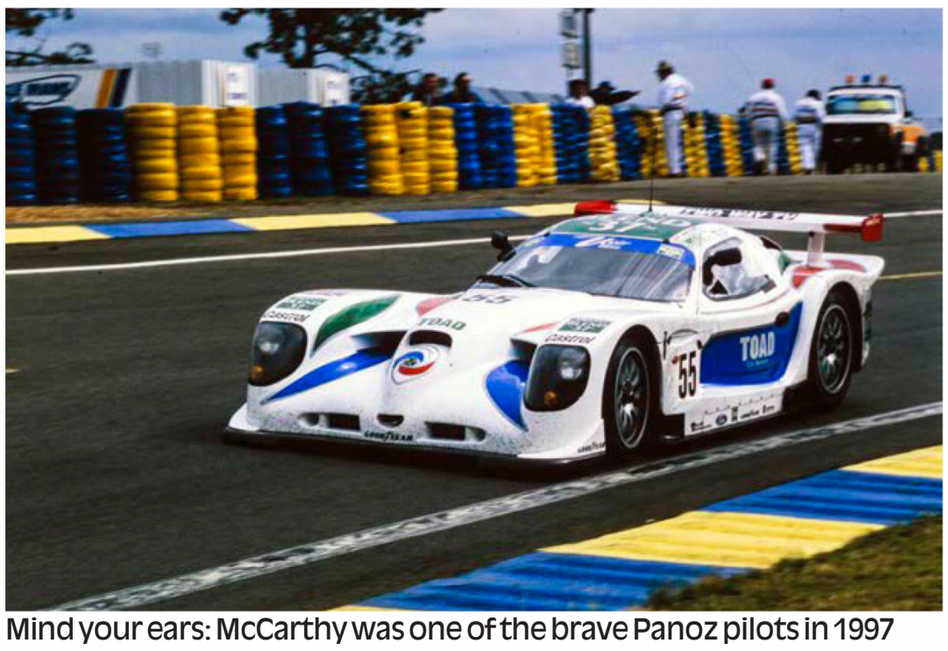
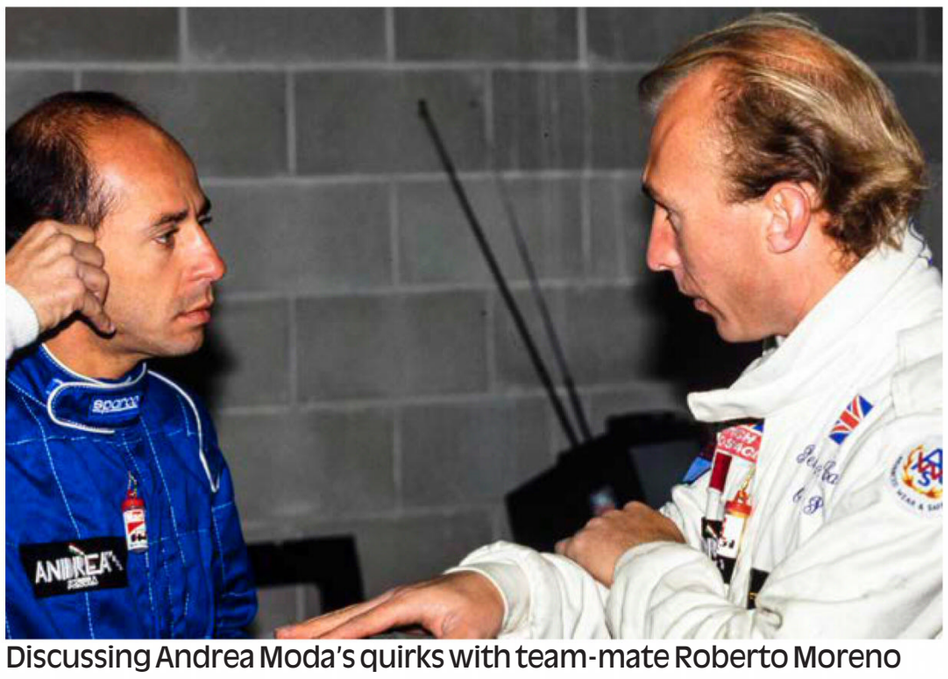
FEATURE

Golden shot: McCarthy in with Audi at Le Mans in 2003



Mind your ears: McCarthy was one of the brave Panoz pilots in 1997



Discussing Andrea Moda's quirks with team-mate Roberto Moreno

always gone well at Spa – I really liked it – and I just felt that whatever car was underneath me, I could go fast immediately. Knowing how unreliable the Andrea Moda was, I wanted to start putting in laps straight away

"Coming out of La Source, I went up through the gears like you would, flat out toward Eau Rouge. As I turned into the left-kink into the corner, I was already at something like 170mph – even in the Andrea Moda. As I went to turn left – which is so gentle it shouldn't really demand anything – I noticed that the steering was very stiff. In my career, I have had all sorts of car problems and you just put more muscle into it, bite through your tongue, hold on and that's the way to deal with it.

"But with the Andrea Moda, I was very, very fortunate to have trusted my instincts there. I immediately hit the brakes. The steering had jammed. I was pointed for the entry of the right-hander but nothing is happening and I am on a trajectory that it taking me head first into the wall.

"I had managed to take some of the speed out of the car. I was pushing the steering wheel like mad – and remember, this is all taking place within about one second. I still remember it vividly. I took just enough speed out of it to be able to turn. The car had gone off the track and eventually turned right and I went up skirting alongside the barriers to the top of the hill. I didn't hit.

"I was going so much slower by the top of the brow, and suddenly I found I could steer. So I accelerated again then couldn't steer once more. It became clear to me – even the Andrea Moda had some downforce – so at speed the downforce was coming on and it was flexing the steering rack, which would then jam and not push the steering arm.

"I came into the pits and told the guys I thought the steering rack was flexing and that I had nearly had the mother and father of all crashes. They turned around and said 'yes, we know'.

"They said they had tested it on Roberto's car the week before and found that it was flexing. They took the dodgy one of Roberto's car and bolted it into mine at Spa, one of the fastest tracks on the calendar. I was going to be leaving the team anyway, but that was it for me. It wasn't Formula 1, it was just ridiculous. It wasn't playing Russian roulette with my safety because all of the chambers seemed to be loaded…

"I did very, very well to get out of that moment, but it was aided by about 500% luck. If I had made that decision to go with it at Eau Rouge and just kept my foot planted: well, it doesn't bear thinking about. Remember, that car was long, sleek and black. All we needed to have done was to put some brass handles on the side and we could have saved time…"

Question: How did your ears cope when you raced the Panoz Esperante GTR-1 GT1 car in 1997?
Jason Inglis
Via email

PM: "That is a really good question. Oh my God! Someone must have sympathy for us. David Brabham, who was also driving one of those cars at the time too already had the advantage that he was half deaf anyway!

"I remember being in the closing stages of a race in Germany and I was closing on James Weaver in the sister car to lap him. I was zeroing in at about eight seconds a lap. James is a brilliant racing driver and I knew there must have been something wrong – and I had a rough idea what it was.

"As we pulled into parc ferme, I ran over to his car and opened the door and, sure enough, he was absolutely out of it. I was training for four or four-and-a-half hours a day. James might be a brilliant driver but training for four hours a day isn't James's cup of tea.

"I dragged him out of the car and I got him laid on the floor and I took his crash helmet off. James has this wonderful cut-glass accent and he looked up at me and in his posh voice and said 'do you know what old boy – with the heat in that car and the f**king noise from the engine, you just lose the will to live, don't you?' I just burst out laughing. That story sums it up and Jason is bang on with his question!"

Question: Audi was the benchmark sportscar team and you were in on the ground floor with the R8C [in 1999]. Just how good was the R8 that you raced at Le Mans in 2003 – and have you ever forgiven Frank Biela for missing the pit entry…?
Simon Graves
Via email

PM: "When we got out there in 2003, Audi's dominance was about to come to a crushing end because the Bentleys were faster, full stop. That's all there was to it.

"We knew that we had to try and keep the

"I thought how could it happen to me – yet again!"

Perry McCarthy

Two-thirds of the Rat Pack: Damon Hill, Martin Donnelly, Perry McCarthy and Julian Bailey

pressure on – it was myself, Biela and Mika Salo. We were pretty convinced that we would beat the other Audis so we thought a podium might be on the cards – and maybe more if something went wrong with the Bentleys.

"Mika and I had virtually no laps in the car before the race. We had made the decision to wring the best out of the car that was possible, so we left Frank in for the qualifying to do the set-up and we knew that we would be able to get up to speed pretty quickly in the race. We did our laps to qualify and that was it. Mika and I needed the bare minimum.

"Frank started the race and then it was going to be Mika, so I thought I would go out the back of the pits to our cabin and have a rest. After 90 minutes, Mika opened the door and told me we were out of the race. I know when he is winding me up because he twists his lip a little bit, but that wasn't happening here. I couldn't believe it. We had run out of fuel. It was probably the only time in my career that I had earned more than Michael Schumacher on a lap-by-lap basis…

"We were distraught and the whole team was gutted. Poor David Ingram from Audi UK, who had been instrumental in putting the whole thing together, was virtually in tears. You look up to the sky and you think, in a selfish way, 'how can this shit be happening to me, *again*?'

"I have always thought the world of Frank – we have lots of fun together – but it was a really stupid mistake. He had tried to overtake a car just a little way before the pit entrance on the lap he was due to be coming in. But his misjudged it and this backmarker was still in the way when Frank needed to get to the pitlane entry."

MN sets the scene: For the general public the Stig is probably the most famous racing driver of all and Perry McCarthy was the man who literally launched the myth as the black-suited non-speaking racer for the BBC's Top Gear show.

Question: How did the chance to break into TV come about?
Anna Brown
Via email

PM: "That was at the launch of my book, Flat Out, Flat Broke. A lot of people were well versed in the ups and downs and trials and tribulations of my career, they encouraged me to write a book, which I did.

"Audi were fantastic and they arranged a launch party at the Audi centre just over the road from the Ritz Hotel in London. We had loads of friends from motor racing and from Formula 1, TV, everything. It was great support and two of them that were there were Jeremy Clarkson and Andy Wilman [Top Gear producer]. It was then and there that Jeremy said we needed to catch up. Top Gear had been off air for quite a while back then but they were bringing it back and that was it. Originally they did want to call me the Gimp though. I am glad that idea got squashed…"

Question: Who was the most talented celebrity you sat alongside at Top Gear as part of your job training the Star in a Reasonably Priced Car?
Jack Crowther
Via email

PM: "I think it would be between JK [from Jamiroquai] and [model and TV presenter] Jodie Kidd. Jay is really ballsy, but Jodie has actually got it – she was ahead of the car mentally and she was way more relaxed. She always blames me for starting off in a career in motor racing because we really got on well. She is a great girl. It is between those two."

MN: So who was the worst then?

PM: "There were a number. Poor Harry Enfield. He was the first guest I had and he probably didn't realise how competitive the whole feature was going to be. I am not sure he applied himself as much as he should have.

"[Socialite] Tara Palmer-Tomkinson, God rest her soul, was definitely somewhere else when she was in the car…and she stayed very close to the white lines…"

Question: Can Jeremy Clarkson actually drive well?
Daniel Potter
Via email

PM: "I would say as a driver, Jeremy is a great journalist. He is above average, but he is bound to be, isn't he? Look at the range of cars he has sat in. He could probably do a fairly good job as an engineer because he has such experience of getting in all sorts of cars with different motors, chassis, gearboxes, etc.

"He has a great breadth of knowledge, but in terms of out-and-out speed, he would probably be the first to admit he is not the one, but he is much better than an average driver."

Question Had you ever considered the British Touring Car Championship and if so, do you think you would do a better job than Mega [nickname of fellow Rat Pack member Mark Blundell, who struggled in the BTCC in a one-off season in 2019]?
Emma Facey
Via email

PM: "Ha ha! That is funny! There was only one time I really considered the BTCC. There was an outline offer on the table for 1993 with a championship-winning team and we started talking about that. The only thing was that it fell apart fairly quickly, because it was run by a character called Vic Lee. I have always liked Vic, he did a brilliant job in BTCC. The only problem was that he fell foul of the law in quite a big way. That initial offer came to nothing because Vic then spent a long time away from the pitlane.

"In 1995, Richard Lloyd called me and asked if I would come out of retirement. I had stopped racing by then because I had to walk away from racing to rebuild my life and cover off the debts that I had accrued trying to make it.

"Lloyd called and he was interested in having me at Audi, so I thought 'yes, I will'. But then, for some reason or another, he then changed his mind and went for John Bintcliffe instead. But, my head was back in the game at that point and motorsport had got me fired up once more, which is why I got into sportscar racing.

"Would I have been quicker than Mega? When he was out there in 2019, I think the pace car was quicker than him! He knows I will be smiling when I am saying that…"

Question: Do you think it would be possible for a young driver today to make his way through the ranks like you did?
Damien Doherty
Via email
Question: What advice would you give to any young driver staring out on his journey now?
Russell Scobbie
Via email

PM: "Is it possible? I don't think it was possible when I did it! What advice would I give? Don't do it…

"It is still hard, but there are certain advantages these days because if you don't come from a wealthy family and you are left to go and get sponsorship – which I was – well we didn't have social media all around us. We didn't have every formula televised. The hospitality areas weren't as refined as they are now. From a sheer package perspective, there is certainly more to offer sponsors now. You have to bear that in mind. There are opportunities now too. And although the costs of everything is eye-watering, it was £700,000 to do F3000 when I was there – and it is all relative to the costs today. The F2 costs are maybe double now – but take into account inflation.

"There are simulators now too, but every driver has one. Maybe their overall professionalism is a bit higher than we were.

"Is it possible for someone to come through like I did? It would be incorrect to say it is not possible but if you are a well-funded driver, the odds of you getting to Formula 1 are astronomic. If you are a driver with very little money, then you can multiply astronomic by a million…"

Question: Which would you rather have raced in Formula 1 this year: a Red Bull or a Mercedes?
Ed Sleigh
Via email

PM: "It is a funny old question that because, as a car, I would probably rather have been in the Red Bull but as a team, I would much rather have been with Mercedes – that is because I don't think I would have lasted five minutes with [Red Bull driver advisor] Dr Helmut Marko – and that is if I was already four minutes late to meet him." ■

Perry McCarthy's best-selling book Flat Out, Flat Broke reflecting on a tumultuous career is still one of the essential reads for any fan. However, you don't have to read it anymore McCarthy has just launched an audio book, with his own words told in his own voice, adding even more insight and realism to the many hilarious and revealing stories contained within it. To order your copy, visit awesound.com/a/flat-out-flat-broke

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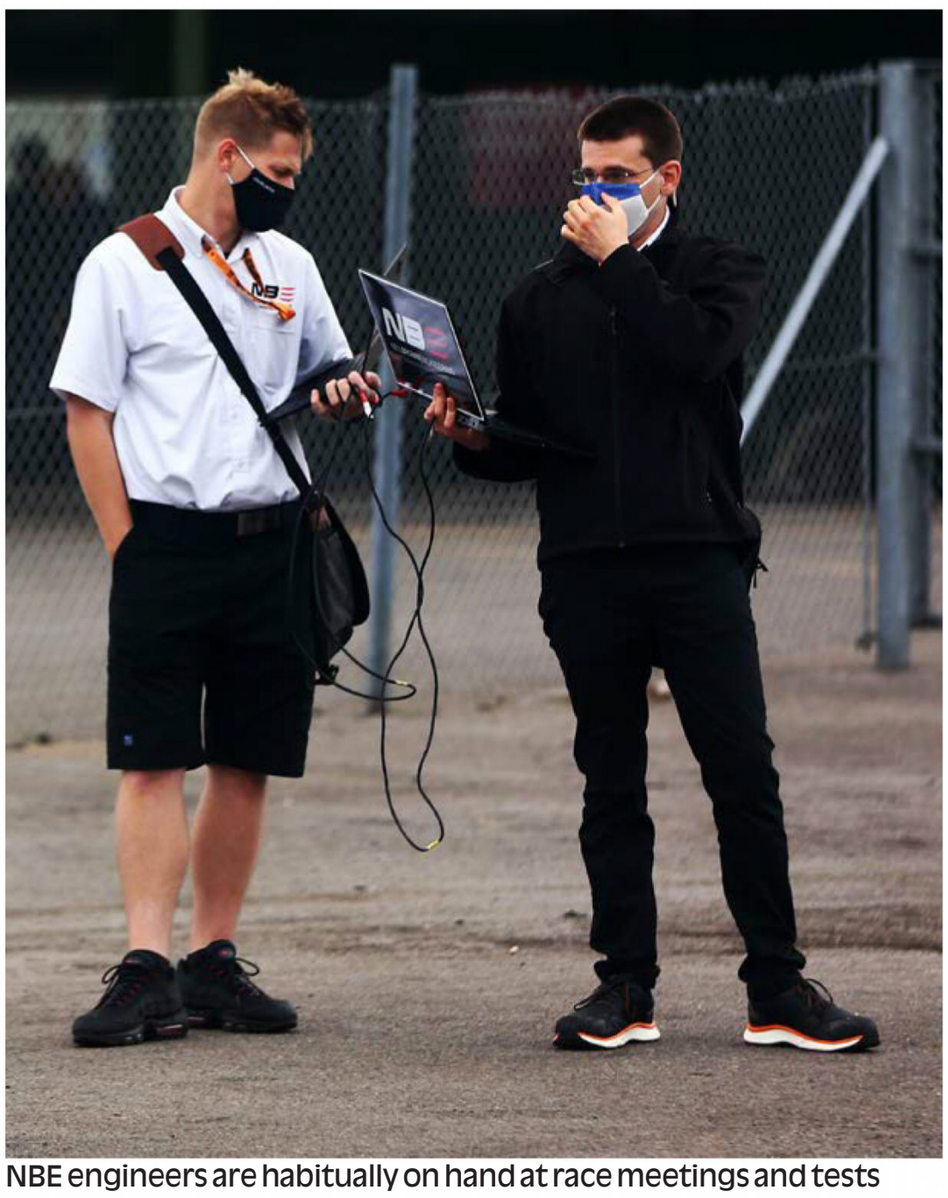
FEATURE

HOW ENGINE EQUALITY ENSURES BRITISH F4'S QUALITY

British F4 is on the up and its secret weapon is its parity in engines, thanks to the work of Neil Brown Engineering. Graham Keilloh explains

Neil Brown Engineering has transformed British F4



NBE engineers are habitually on hand at race meetings and tests

Whatever it is that decides the British Formula 4 championship, it won't be the engines. And this is a good thing.

This is because it gets to the fundamentals of the category: it's one that aims to identify which of its young drivers, on their first rung of the single-seater ladder, are made of the right stuff.

"Maintaining parity of performance across 20 race cars is fundamental for the job that we do," says Wayne Mathurin, sales and workshop manager of British F4's engine support Neil Brown Engineering, to Motorsport News. "And it cements the integrity of the championship, that it's all about the driver and not the equipment that they've got or any one single team."

And it wasn't always this way, as Karun Chandhok, board member of British F4's new organiser Motorsport UK, explains. "If you look at the recent history with the Ford [British F4 engines], in the early years there were discrepancies, the teams were constantly complaining about straightline speed deficits," he notes.

"This came back from the feedback from the meeting we had with the teams [this year], we said 'what do you guys think about the engines, are you happy now with equalisation?' And they said unanimously that Neil Brown's have done a great job and they go to Thruxton and places like that and they no longer see the straightline speed differences that they used to in the early years. So they were frankly very keen for us to engage with Neil Brown and to carry that on into the new power unit."

Mathurin continues: "They're [the engines] all within half a horsepower of each other. And that's through a complete rev range, so not just at the top or just at the bottom but at every single point."

Mathurin reckons too this unique selling point directly benefits the championship's bottom line of attracting teams and drivers, in a competitive market wherein Germany, Italy and Spain also have strong F4 championships. "It's quite evident that it definitely has an impact," he says. "Since we've taken over, year on year we've seen the steady growth in terms of the numbers and interest in the championship. It's really strong at the moment and we want to continue that."

And don't just take NBE's word for it. Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers concurs. "We've attracted new teams into the championship [for 2022], getting Virtuosi in, getting Hitech in, and retaining the top teams like Carlin and JHR," Chambers says.

"You can't pick any one team and say it's better or worse than the others and that's a mouth-watering prospect for the racing but also for youngsters coming in because in some championships there is one or two teams you have to be with or you're not going to win. And that's devastating.

"So the partnership with Neil Brown Engineering to equalise the engines to make absolutely certain that this is a fair and equal championship is absolutely crucial. So I'm really proud of the package we've come up with now, I think it's going to be the best in the world."

NBE has been going for over 40 years and its work includes with Mugen Honda in Formula 3, with Audi Sport in DTM, in Formula 3000, plus NBE is a British Touring Car Championship perennial across many BTCC technical eras. NBE was brought in as British F4's engine support provider from 2018, and the championship was determined to do so even though NBE was initially reluctant.

At that point, British F4 could not claim to offer the engine parity that it does now. "The Ford powerplant unit [was] initially supplied by Sodemo," Mathurin explains, "and there was some areas that were not quite right and there were some questionable performances across the board. Whilst they did meet the FIA-specified graph and tolerance window at the time it was quite clear that it wasn't adequate to do the job, the tolerance window needed to be much much tighter and they needed a better control over everything to enable that window to be met and achieved and retained throughout the course of a season. So they [British

> ***"It cements integrity; it's all about the driver"***
>
> **Wayne Mathurin**

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

The recent Brands Hatch GP round was a case in point: with 10 cars covered by less than half a second

For Chambers British F4 engine approach is key

F4] were having problems and they were on a bit of a downward spiral.

"One of the problems is everybody believes that somebody else has possibly got or looking for an unfair advantage. The problem was previously they were leasing engines and as soon as they felt that they were down on performance, the default setting is 'there's something wrong with the engine'.

"And typically [competitors] come from that karting fraternity and where they throw engines at things and with the fact that they are leasing their engines, previously they were always throwing the engine back at the manufacturer or the tuner. When we took over the championship fortunately we came at the right time and the teams owned the engines at that point; it meant that it was their responsibility to maintain them and look after them."

So how is NBE achieving equal engines? Motorsport UK technical director John Ryan explains: "Mechanically the engine will be very much the same [as used in continental F4] but it's a lot about the mapping, but also the turbocharger itself, the modifications they make on the turbo and we're very confident of the fact that we're looking at plus or minus half a percent [difference between the engines] whereas we know normally it might plus or minus one-and-a-half percent, which is a massive difference across the world and just visiting some of the other championships we're very much envied of what we've been able to achieve with that balance of performance.

"You look at Brands Hatch [this year] during qualifying the top 10 was split by a tenth or so [actually 0.454s], and that was on the Grand Prix circuit."

NBE's work aids competitiveness in another way, as in continental F4 it's known for larger teams with larger budgets to benefit from stockpiling.

Chambers explains: "An individual driver, they might have six or seven engines and they're all being put through run cycles, they're all being used in different ways to try and extract that extra little bit of one-and-a-half percent of performance. Complete waste of money, people are buying too much hardware, too much testing just to get the engines up to mileage and we really want to do away with that."

Mathurin develops the point: "On the continent there's changing turbos at regular intervals just to gain a little bit of advantage, the fact that the turbo will reach its boost a few milliseconds sooner you could add that up and over the course of the race maybe you've had max boost for an extra 10 seconds, 20 seconds, and that's a difference between 10 foot and 100 foot.

"The engines evolve as well; you'll find teams that have got the money will buy a range of engines and then use them at different times because they're at different circuits but then they're also at different states of evolvement. There's always going to be one that's potentially better than the others and they've got to find that one and put it in for the weekend they want it in for."

There is an obvious question with all this too: why aren't other major F4 championships doing what the British category does? "They are simply not doing the work that we do," Mathurin asserts. "The job that we do and the way that we do it, they're just aren't doing it. Partially because they don't have full access to the areas of the software to achieve what they need to achieve and the way they're doing it's not really right. And every engine has the same map in Europe but no two engines are identical unfortunately, so we will work with every single engine uniquely and every engine has its own map."

And for 2022 as intimated there is a change in British F4, as it replaces the Ford unit with the Abarth that is much more 'mainstream' in F4 circles. For NBE though the task doesn't change.

"At the end for us the job's the same," Mathurin confirms, "it won't be any more difficult or any easier. We're looking at it with open eyes so one of the first jobs was to get the engine up and on the dyno and just let's see how it performs and what it does.

"We'll go through the process, the due diligence in January of mapping the engine, giving it to a team, taking it out, testing with the engine just to make sure that we don't see any anomalies and then as the engines arrive with the cars from Italy, from Tatuus, then the engines will start arriving here and we'll be doing the upgrade kits and mapping each engine individually and equalising them."

Ryan reckons NBE's doing a good job with the Abarth too. "I've already seen some of the power curves etc," he says, "what they've been doing on all of that is really exciting. We know we can actually get this engine the same if not even better than what we did with the previous engine."

British F4 is also getting more mainstream in 2022 with its switch to the Tatuus chassis from the Mygale, and while this gives competitors additional scope to compete in the British plus other F4 championships, Britain's distinct engine approach is non-negotiable nevertheless.

"You have to square away the fact that we're going to have a UK-spec homologated engine which is different from the rest of the world," Chambers concedes. "You could say well it'd be much easier if they were all the same engines; we've stuck firmly to the fact that equalisation is absolutely crucial, that is our competitive advantage.

"It does mean however though that if we want to invite teams to come over to compete in this championship from other places they will need to either buy or lease a UK-spec engine and vice versa."

NBE's Mathurin concludes: "The championship's done a lot of work over the last four seasons, to get where we are now and now we'll see the benefits of it, we just need to make sure that we do an equally or if not better job than we have done." ■

NBE has a new engine to work with in 2022, but its job is the same

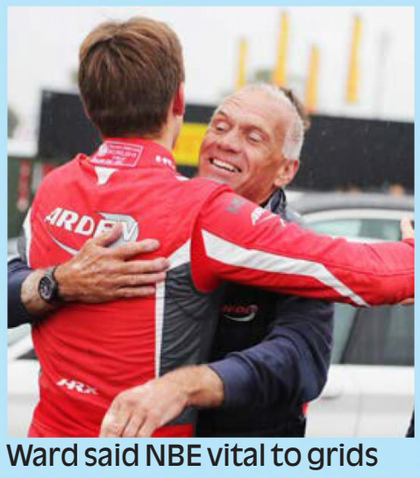
Ward spells it out

The importance of Neil Brown Engineering to British Formula 4 was made clear to me almost from the beginning. It was early 2020 and my first paddock assignment as a full-time Motorsport News employee: Formula 4's pre-season media day at Donington Park.

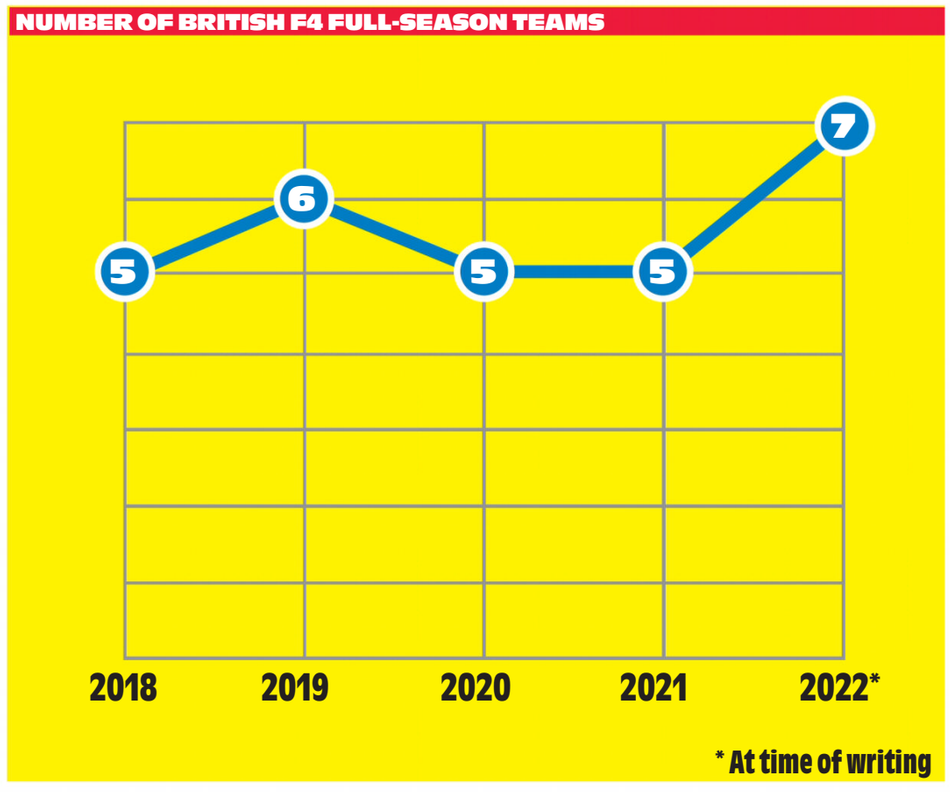
The championship's grid for the season ahead was looking strong. And when I asked Arden team boss Gary Ward what explained the upturn, his answer was clear. "Now that Neil Brown [Engineering] have become partners they're controlling the engines a lot better" he told me immediately. "It's made a big difference to... the rumours are going around if you get what I mean from years of past, now that proves it [the effectiveness of NBE] this year with 16 cars going straight into the first round.

"They've really controlled the championship now, they've really locked it down to being very equal and that was the whole idea of setting out to do it so that it was down to that pedal in the middle.

"With Sodemo that was originally doing the engine, there wasn't a lot of control with the engine coming through, so if you got a good one it was never controlled through the year. Whereas Neil Brown, they control all the time, they're plugging in 24-7."



Ward said NBE vital to grids



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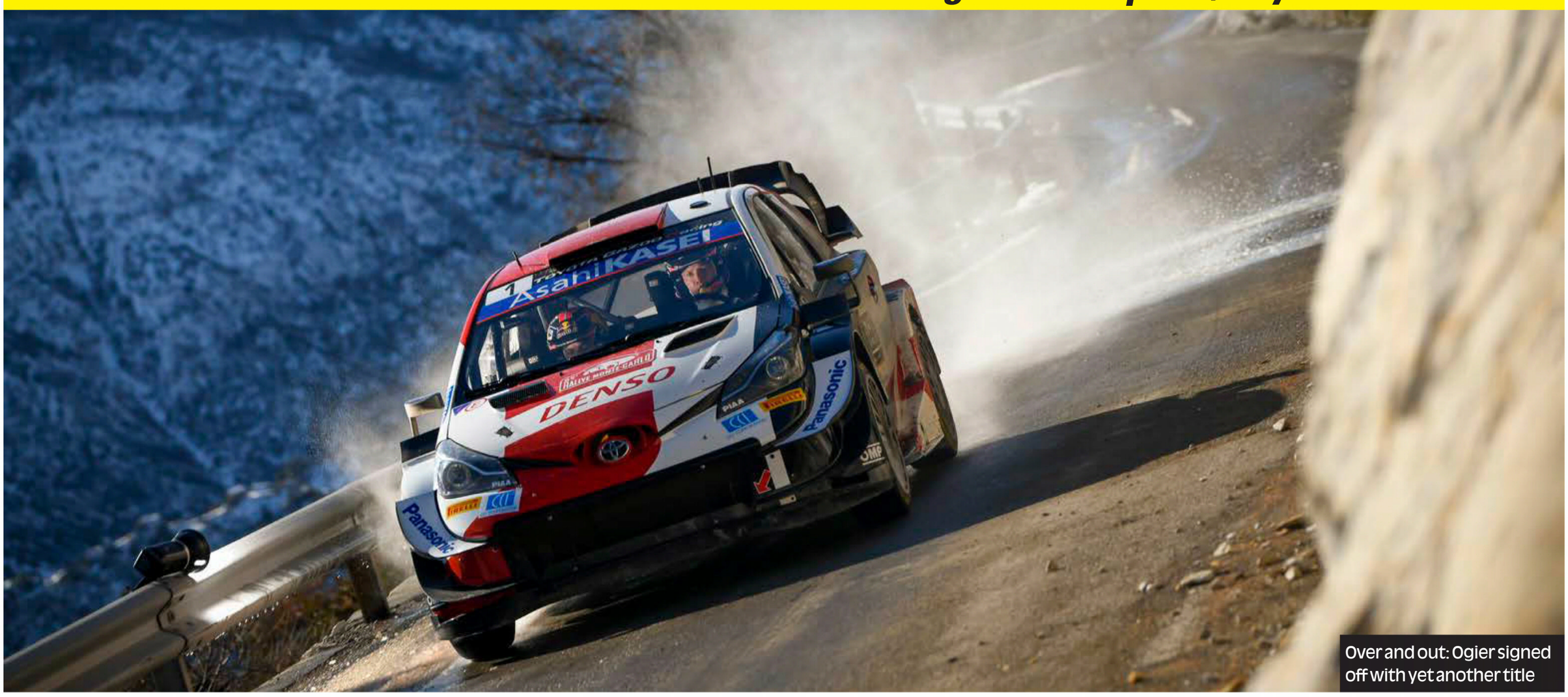
HOW OGIER'S EIGHTH WONDER HAS SEALED HIS WRC LEGACY

The Frenchman ended his full-time WRC career with grace and pace, says Nick Garton



Over and out: Ogier signed off with yet another title

History may overlook the fact that the 2021 World Rally Championship was claimed by a man who shouldn't have been there.

One of the small mercies of Covid, as far as fans are concerned, is that it delayed the departure of Sebastien Ogier from the WRC because 2021 was without doubt his greatest year on every front.

Ogier originally arrived at Toyota in 2020 with the aim of adding one more World championship title with one more manufacturer, to sit alongside those earned with Volkswagen and M-Sport. He then planned to retire, although this decision had been taken at the end of 2019, the most miserable season of his career.

This nadir had come when Ogier had returned to Citroen, the team in which his early talent had been nurtured. It was also the team from which he had left in a huff in 2011 after feeling that his team-mate, Sebastien Loeb, was favoured in their knock-down, drag-out internecine title fight.

By 2019, Loeb had long-since retired and Citroen was struggling with the C3 WRC, which offered Ogier another tempting opportunity to walk on water. After all, it was he who had led a start-up team from Volkswagen to domination, then gone to the privateer M-Sport set-up and delivered again. Conjuring a silk purse from the sow's ear that was the C3 WRC would, after the rancour of his 2011 departure, be poetic justice.

Yet rather than delivering glory to his countrymen, 2019 showed that Ogier was only human after all. He was beaten to the title by Ott Tanak; a talent from which Ogier previously had little to fear when they were in the same equipment. He was even beaten to second place by Hyundai's mercurial Thierry Neuville, probably the only man since Loeb to worry Ogier for pace, albeit less so for consistency.

Thus, it was a very different Ogier who arrived at Toyota in 2020: less bulletproof, less abrasive, less toweringly entitled. Then Covid arrived and the newly humanised Ogier found a new role: statesman. His concern for the people of Mexico as the WRC charged into lockdown was genuine and moving, and his leadership through the oddball 2020 season was admirable.

It also brought Ogier another title, albeit only after team-mate Elfyn Evans slipped up in the Italian Alps. Just before winning his seventh championship, Ogier recanted his decision to retire and came back in 2021 with nothing to prove to himself or anyone else. The weight was lifted from his shoulders, and he was free to enjoy the ultimate WRC farewell tour. It was amazing to watch.

Things began in Monte Carlo with a hometown celebration for the boy from Gap. Rather than indulge in any PR flim-flammering, Ogier made a simple declaration before the start: "I'm here to win this rally, so I'm going to win it."

Dodgy brakes left him only fourth after the first day, but then came the charge. On Saturday morning he delivered a performance that bears comparison with those of Ari Vatanen and Walter Rohrl, taking 18.7 seconds from second-placed Evans on the day's opening stage – 20s clear of anyone else in the world. With a performance of such magnitude, his place in the history books as the only eight-time Monte winner was assured.

The old Ogier wasn't completely absent in 2021, however. His traditional rants about how unfair it all was for the championship leader to spend the first day of each rally sweeping stages may have gone, but he was withering when it came to the shortcomings of new-for-2021 tyre supplier, Pirelli. Yet even this was not the old griping about some perceived slight to himself; it was simply Ogier having the cajones to say what the rest of the drivers only dared to hint at in public – statesmanship, in other words.

Then came Lapland and the Arctic Rally, at which point expectations were reversed and Hyundai showed up full of fight on the Toyota team's home soil – or rather, home snow. In 2020, then-teenage Kalle Rovanpera's Yaris WRC won the non-championship event as a final shakedown before life as a WRC driver. In 2021, the team's test driver Juho Hanninen garnered victory and valuable data before the WRC rolled in to Rovaniemi for its turn a month later.

Despite having sought out every advantage, Toyota failed to deliver the predicted domination. Instead, it was an inspired Tanak in an astonishingly rapid Hyundai who took the Korean marque's first victory of the year, leading from start to finish. The pre-event favourite, Rovanpera, was left flat-footed by Tanak's speed and even had to work hard to hold off Neuville for second place.

The Finn did, however, become the youngest championship leader in WRC history, once his runner-up points in Lapland were added to those for fourth place on the Monte. This was because Ogier, never at home on snow, went off on the second day (blaming the tyres), and would only finish 20th. This history-making reign would only last until the

ROUND BY ROUND

MONTE CARLO RALLY

When: January 21-24

1 Sebastien Ogier (Toyota)
2 Elfyn Evans (Toyota)
3 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai)

As Sebastien Ogier and Julien Ingrassia claimed an eighth Monte victory, Theirry Neuville took little time to adapt to life without long-term co-driver Nicolas Gilsoul by winning the 10th-ever stage with new wingman Martijn Wydaeghe. They place third overall behind Elfyn Evans and Scott Martin. Teemu Suninen was on course to win the opening stage before crashing his M-Sport Fiesta. Andreas Mikkelsen won WRC2, Yohan Rossel did likewise in WRC3.

ARCTIC RALLY FINLAND

When: February 26-28

1 Ott Tanak (Hyundai)
2 Kalle Rovanpera (Toyota)
3 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai)

A late replacement for the cancelled Rally Sweden, Arctic Rally Finland took six weeks to organise and provided the WRC's winter fix with night stages, a rare Sebastien Ogier error and a new points leader in Kalle Rovanpera, 20. Oliver Solberg, 19 at the time, was third on his third stage in a World Rally Car. Without a top-line drive, Esapekka Lappi returned to his old Printsport team and dominated WRC2.

CROATIA RALLY

When: April 22-25

1 Sebastien Ogier (Toyota)
2 Elfyn Evans (Toyota)
3 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai)

Thierry Neuville started leg two leading by 7.7s but reached midday 19.6s in arrears after being sent out on a combination of soft and hard tyres when the dry conditions called for hards. He fought back but lost out on winning by 8.1s. But the real drama happened up ahead as a mistake from Elfyn Evans, who was leading by 3.9s, let in Sebastien Ogier to win by 0.6s.

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

A more relaxed Sebsatien Ogier took it all in his stride during 2021

Despite winning on the Arctic Rally, some frustrations boiled over between Ott Tanak and Hyundai

Kalle Rovanpera rewrote the WRC record books as its youngest winner with glory on Rally Estonia

first stage of the next event, however.

Any thoughts that Hyundai was preparing to make a fight of things ended soon after the WRC headed south from the Arctic Circle. Multiple bugbears have festered within the Alzenau-based team in recent seasons, not least an inability to pick the correct tyres in even slightly marginal conditions, which put paid to its hopes in Monte Carlo. This curse struck again when the series returned to asphalt on Croatia's first WRC appearance as host for the third round.

On pure pace, this event was Neuville's for the taking but, once again, Hyundai sent him out on the wrong rubber. This dropped the Belgian half a minute behind the charging Toyotas of Ogier and Evans. By Sunday afternoon it was the Welshman who held sway by 3.9s at the start of the closing Powerstage, but an inspired Ogier and a penultimate corner error by Evans delivered victory to the reigning champion by just 0.6s to record the third-closest result in WRC history.

Hyundai boss Andrea Adamo took the fall. "From when I'm here [since 2019], most of the time, when there has been a difficult tyre choice we were able to pick the wrong one," he summarised. "So, it's something in the organisation I set up that doesn't work. I take responsibility for it, and for which I had better move my ass and solve it."

The Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC itself was not blameless. In 2021, as in 2020 and before, the engine repeatedly stalled after the handbrake had been tweaked, at a cost to its crews of minutes over the season. Then came the mid-season gravel run through Portugal, Sardinia and the welcome return of Kenya to the calendar, on each occasion ending early for Hyundai with broken suspension.

A potential 1-2-3 finish in Portugal disintegrated, as did a 1-2 on the Italian round. On the Safari, Neuville's leading car collapsed beneath him while Tanak lost two minutes to his windscreen fogging up in a downpour. "It's amazing. The quality's amazing," glowered the Estonian as he stared down the camera of the global TV feed. Back in Korea, where the importance of protocol makes Japanese culture look positively louche, every syllable landed like a bombshell.

Any fading Hyundai hopes would hinge upon Estonia. Tanak aimed to repeat his emotional home win from 2020 but a double Pirelli puncture intervened and the flying Craig Breen, in the team's third car, had to be slowed by every means at his team's disposal in order to let

'Ogier was free to enjoy his farewell WRC tour'

Tanak back into second place behind the winner, Rovanpera.

This victory meant the 20-year-old Finn once again made history, deposing Jari-Matti Latvala in the annals as the WRC's youngest-ever event winner. While there may have been a pang or two for Latvala in losing his record, he was at least enjoying an unprecedented first year of success as team principal at Toyota, taking over from four-time champion and team founder, Tommi Makinen. There had been a good deal of head-scratching when Latvala's name was announced as the new leader for the operation, not least from Makinen himself, who one suspected might have wanted the honour to be conferred upon his sporting director and longtime collaborator, Kai Lindholm.

Latvala's appointment was surprising in part because he had still been trying to piece together a deal to return to the WRC as a driver, but also because this was very much a driver who needed the support of the team to achieve his best while in the car. An arm round the shoulder, as it's known. As such he initially made an unlikely figurehead, particularly when managing the man who did more damage to his career and confidence than any other, former team-mate Ogier, but in fact Latvala soared in the role.

His appreciation of landing the rally world's dream management job was tangible, while his heart-on-the-sleeve humanity was appreciated by all. Probably there was nobody better to support young Rovanpera after he destroyed his Yaris WRC (and championship lead) on the first stage in Croatia because Latvala had been in a similar position more than once and still within recent memory. But equally, when it became clear at mid-season that Ogier was toying with the idea of returning for either a full or part-time season in 2022, Latvala was tellingly no better informed than the rest of us – the Frenchman had gone direct to Tokyo in order to conduct negotiations.

Among the WRC team principals, however, Latvala's headaches in the job

continued on page 30

RALLY PORTUGAL
When: May 20-23
1 Elfyn Evans (Toyota)
2 Dani Sordo (Hyundai)
3 Sebastien Ogier (Toyota)
How a Hyundai driver failed to win in Portugal remains hard to fathom but the combination of a fragile right rear (Ott Tanak), an iffy pacenote leading to contact with a tree stump (Thierry Neuville) and engine issues (Dani Sordo) left Elfyn Evans to win for the first time in 2021 ahead of Sordo and Sebastien Ogier. Gus Greensmith impressed in fifth ahead of Takamoto Katsuta, Esapekka Lappi won WRC2.

RALLY ITALY
June 3-6
1 Sebastien Ogier (Toyota)
2 Elfyn Evans (Toyota)
3 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai)
Ott Tanak profited from running fourth to canter into an early lead with five straight stage wins. That advantage grew through leg two's opening trio of tests to the extent he was leading by 40.5s. Then his right-rear wheel fell off on SS12 to hand Sebastien Ogier a lead he would control to the finish despite a misfire following a watersplash. Elfyn Evans overcame set-up issues to finish second.

SAFARI RALLY
June 24-27
1 Sebastien Ogier (Toyota)
2 Takamoto Katsuta (Toyota)
3 Ott Tanak (Hyundai)
Mud, zebras, elephants, rain and a Hyundai horror show with Thierry Neuville denied on the final morning when his i20's rear suspension broke. He'd started the last leg almost one minute in front after just short of doubling his lead on SS13. Takamoto Katsuta inherited first but couldn't resist Sebastien Ogier's pace and settled for second as Adrien Fourmaux took his maiden stage win. Elfyn Evans broke a front-right wheel.

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WRC REVIEW

were small beer. At M-Sport, Rich Millener once again needed every ounce of his considerable stoicism in a season when the squad's ageing Ford Fiestas were struggling to keep up. Teemu Suninen threatened to win the first stage of the year in Monte Carlo but then wrote the car off before passing the control board, which was a brutal blow to his relationship with the team. The divorce was hastened by the emergence of Adrien Fourmaux as a genuinely exciting prospect, making himself at home in the top half-dozen cars and bringing ample funds from Red Bull and the French motor federation to boot.

To further increase M-Sport's good cheer, Gus Greensmith's progress under the tutelage of veteran co-driver Chris Patterson came on in leaps and bounds. Not only was the Englishman a much more consistent performer by mid-season, but he was also considerably less prickly in front of the media, and a very likeable personality began to emerge as he gained confidence through the year.

Among the trio of team leaders, Hyundai boss Adamo certainly drew the short straw in 2021. Breen once again drove at nine-tenths in Belgium in order for Neuville to take victory and this was arguably Hyundai's highlight of the year… but by that stage both the drivers' and manufacturers' titles were clearly heading to Toyota. The manufacturers' title, which Hyundai had claimed in 2019 and 2020, has always been the benchmark of success in Seoul and the squad simply got too much wrong too often to complete the hat-trick. To no great surprise, Adamo left Hyundai with immediate effect in December.

It was all about Toyota and Evans vs Ogier for the final third of the calendar, but aside from a scintillating victory in Finland, the Welshman was fighting uphill in his bid to catch a man like Ogier. This was simply a man who has towered over the WRC for nine years signing off as he wanted to, with his head held high.

Watching from the sidelines in a distant third among the manufacturers, his former boss, M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson, summed up the mesmerising spectacle:

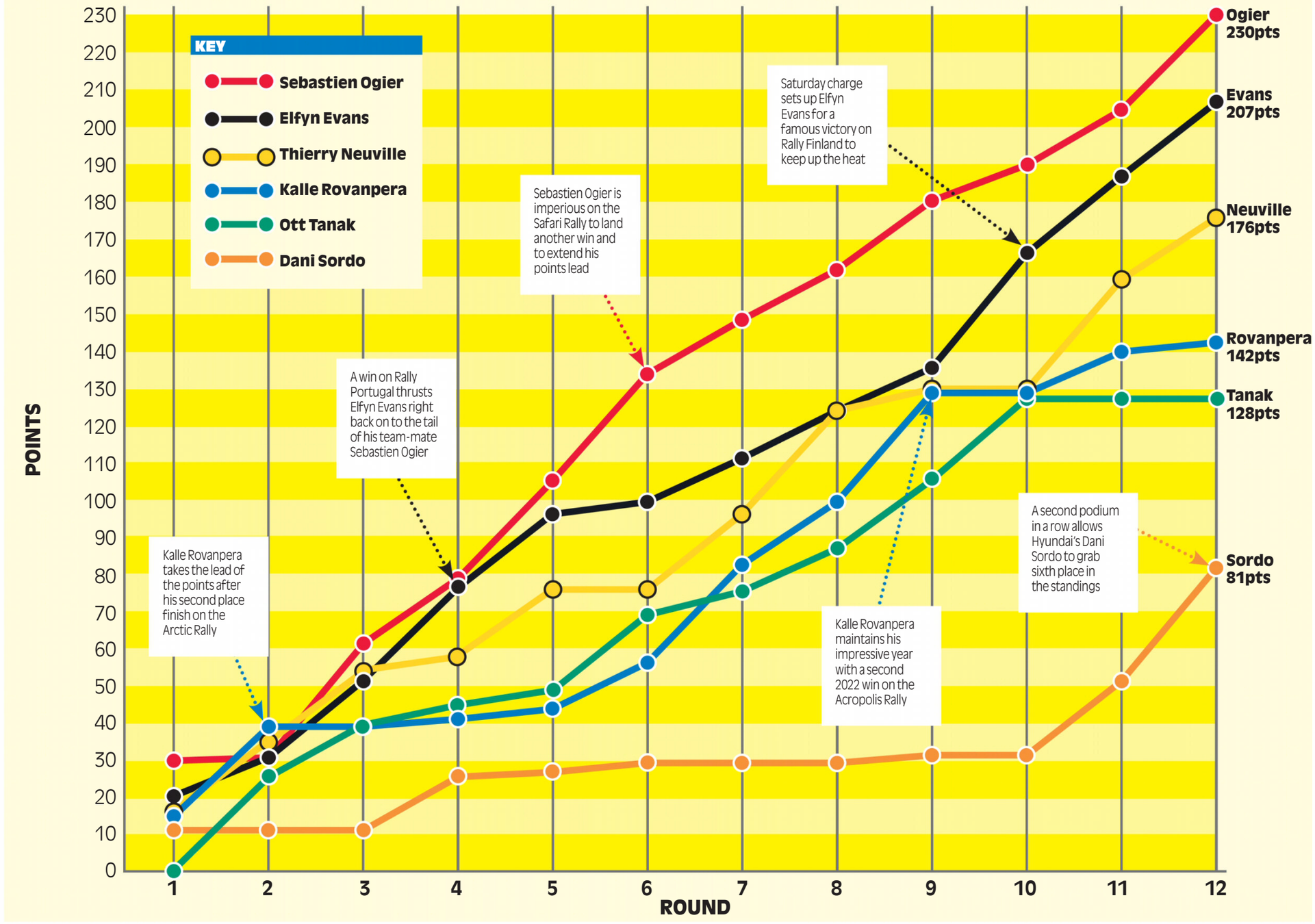
"His drive on the first day in Sardinia, for example, was just absolutely fantastic – I love it!" Wilson enthused. "Honestly, knowing him like I do and watching that effort when he was first on the road… just exceptional."

In many ways, the entire WRC has been enriched by Sebastien Ogier's success at Toyota in 2020 and 2021. Both in and out of the cockpit, his final title-winning season has given what was already a well-deserved place in the sport's pantheon an undoubted lustre. His WRC legacy is assured. ■

'Hyundai's Adamo fell on his sword in December'

Epic highs and lows for Millener

HOW THE WRC WAS WON


KEY
Sebastien Ogier
Elfyn Evans
Thierry Neuville
Kalle Rovanpera
Ott Tanak
Dani Sordo
POINTS
ROUND
Sebastien Ogier is imperious on the Safari Rally to land another win and to extend his points lead
A win on Rally Portugal thrusts Elfyn Evans right back on to the tail of his team-mate Sebastien Ogier
Kalle Rovanpera takes the lead of the points after his second place finish on the Arctic Rally
Saturday charge sets up Elfyn Evans for a famous victory on Rally Finland to keep up the heat
Kalle Rovanpera maintains his impressive year with a second 2022 win on the Acropolis Rally
A second podium in a row allows Hyundai's Dani Sordo to grab sixth place in the standings
Ogier 230pts
Evans 207pts
Neuville 176pts
Rovanpera 142pts
Tanak 128pts
Sordo 81pts

STANDINGS

World Rally Championship 2021

POS	DRIVER (NAT)	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)	Toyota Yaris WRC	**30**	1	**30**	18	**27**	**27**	15	14	18	10	14	**26**	230
2	Elfyn Evans (GBR)	Toyota Yaris WRC	21	110	20	**26**	18	4	12	13	12	**30**	21	20	207
3	Thierry Neuville (BEL)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	17	18	18	4	20	DNF	19	**28**	6	DNF	**29**	17	176
4	Kalle Rovanpera (FIN)	Toyota Yaris WRC	16	23	DNF	2	3	12	**26**	17	**30**	0	11	2	142
5	Ott Tanak (EST)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	DNF	**27**	13	5	4	20	5	13	19	22	DNF	DNE	128
6	Dani Sordo (ESP)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	11	DNE	DNE	18	1	1	DNE	DNE	12	DNE	20	18	81
7	Takamoto Katsuta (JPN)	Toyota Yaris WRC	8	8	8	12	12	18	DNF	DNF	DNS	2	0	10	78
8	Craig Breen (IRL)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	DNE	16	8	DNE	DNE	DNE	18	18	DNE	16	DNE	DNE	76
9	Gus Greensmith (GBR)	Ford Fiesta WRC	4	2	6	10	0	12	0	0	10	8	8	4	64
10	Adrien Fourmaux (FIN)	Ford Fiesta WRC	2	0	10	8	0	10	0	0	6	6	0	0	42

11 Teemu Suninen (FIN, Ford Fiesta WRC, Ford Fiesta Rally2, Volkswagen Polo GTI R5, Hyundai i20 N Rally2, Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 29; 12 Esapekka Lappi (FIN, Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 22; 13 Oliver Solberg (SWE, Hyundai i20 R5, Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC, Hyundai i20 N Rally2) 22; 14 Mads Ostberg (NOR, Citroen C3 Rally2) 15; 15 Yohan Rossel (FRA, Citroen C3 Rally2) 12; 16 Jari Huttunen (FIN, Hyundai i20 R5, Hyundai i20 N Rally2, Ford Fiesta Rally2) 10; 17 Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR, Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 10; 18 Pierre-Louis Loubet (FRA, Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 6; 19 Onkar Rai (KEN, Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 6; 20 Pepe Lopez (ESP, Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 4; etc. **Co-Drivers' championship:** 1 Julien Ingrassia (FRA) 230; 2 Scott Martin (GBR) 207; 3 Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL) 176; 4 Jonne Halttunen (FIN); 5 Martin Jarveoja (EST) 128; 6 Paul Nagle (IRL) 76; 7 Dan Barritt (GBR) 66; 8 Chris Patterson (IRL) 54; 9 Candida Carrera (ESP) 50; 10 Renaud Jamoul (BEL) 50; etc. **Manufacturers' championship:** 1 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT 520; 2 Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team 462; 3 M-Sport Ford World Rally Team 199; 4 Hyundai 2C Competition 68 **WRC2 Drivers:** 1 Mikkelsen 149; 2 Ostberg 126; 3 Huttunen 107; 4 Marco Bulacia (BOL, Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 107; 5 Suninen 93; etc. **WRC2 Co-Drivers:** 1 Torstein Eriksen (NOR); 2 Mikko Lukka (FIN) 107; 3 Marcelo Der Ohannesian (ARG) 105; 4 Ola Floene (NOR) 98; 5 Mikko Markkula (FIN) 93; etc. **WRC3 Drivers:** 1 Rossel 130; 2 Kajetan Kajetanowicz (POL, Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 127; 3 Emil Lindholm (FIN, Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 73; 4 Chris Ingram (GBR, Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 70; 5 Nicolas Ciamin (FRA, Citroen C3 Rally2) 57; etc. **WRC3 Co-Drivers:** 1 Maciej Szczepaniak (POL) 127; 2 Alexandre Coria (FRA) 99; 3 Ross Whittock (GBR) 70; 4 Yannick Roche (FRA) 57; 5 Reeta Hamalainen (FIN) 53; etc. **JWRC Drivers (all Ford Fiesta Rally4):** 1 Sami Pajari (FIN) 137; 2 Jon Armstrong (GBR) 119; 3 Martins Sesks (LAT) 85; 4 Lauri Joona (FIN); 80; 5 Robert Virves (EST) 71; etc. **JWRC Co-Drivers:** 1 Marko Salminen (FIN) 112; 2 Phil Hall (GBR) 107; 3 Renars Francis (LAT) 77; 4 Liam Regan (IRL) 48; 5 Mikael Korhonen (FIN) 42; etc. **Rounds:** 1 Monte Carlo Rally; 2 Arctic Rally Finland; 3 Croatia Rally; 4 Rally Portugal; 5 Rally Italy; 6 Safari Rally; 7 Rally Estonia; 8 Ypres Rally; 9 Acropolis Rally; 10 Rally Finland; 11 Rally Spain; 12 Rally Monza.

ROUND BY ROUND

RALLY ESTONIA

When: July 15-18

1 Kalle Rovanpera (Toyota)
2 Craig Breen (Hyundai)
3 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai)

After a front-right puncture put home hero Ott Tanak out of the lead on SS3, he then went off on SS4, bust another tyre and packed up for the day to leave Kalle Rovanpera heading Craig Breen. Breen tried everything on Saturday's opener to cancel out an 8.5s deficit but Rovanpera was 14.3s faster. The contest was over as Rovanpera became the youngest WRC event winner.

YPRES RALLY

When: August 13-15

1 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai)
2 Craig Breen (Hyundai)
3 Kalle Rovanpera (Toyota)

While pre-event favourite Thierry Neuville won at home for a relieved Hyundai team, Craig Breen kept the Belgian honest and could have been even closer before the event relocated to Spa for the final leg had Ott Tanak not got in his way after stopping to change a puncture on Saturday morning. Third-placed Kalle Rovanpera was the best of the Toyotas, whose strength was reduced to three when Takamoto Katsuta crashed.

ACROPOLIS RALLY

When: September 9-12

1 Kalle Rovanpera (Toyota)
2 Ott Tanak (Hyundai)
3 Sebastien Ogier (Toyota)

It wasn't just the fact he won his first Acropolis that was impressive, it was the manner in which Kalle Rovanpera topped the order that stood out. Still 20, the Finn's Saturday morning charge was stunning. He was 36s faster than Ott Tanak over four stages covering 56 miles. He then beat Tanak by 14.1s and team-mate Sebastien Ogier by 28s on Sunday's first 15-mile test. Gus Greensmith was fifth for M-Sport, while Chris Ingram was second in WRC3.

Jari-Matti Latvala reached new heights, taking over as Toyota boss

Neuville's championship hopes collapsed underneath him on Safari

BRITS IN THE CLASSES

Ingram learned the WRC ropes in 2021

THE TALENTS WITH AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

It's 20 years since the Battle of Britain pitched Colin McRae and Richard Burns toe-to-toe for the WRC drivers' title and let's be frank, it has not look likely fans would see such dominance from the British Isles since then. But in 2021 there has been a rebirth.

The 2022 season looms with genuine title contenders in the form of Elfyn Evans and Craig Breen heading Toyota and M-Sport respectively, but in 2021 there were green shoots emerging throughout the classes that comprise the WRC: each of them full of promise.

Leading the way was the 2019 European Rally champion, Chris Ingram. Covid swept the entire world from beneath Ingram's feet in 2020, but he battled back into the fray in style. Acquiring dedicated sponsorship and leveraging the faith that he enjoys from Skoda, he pieced together an ambitious three-year plan to contest a short WRC3 programme this year before aiming towards WRC2 in 2022 with the class title as his target for 2023.

Despite missing the first quarter of the season, Ingram only narrowly lost out on third place in WRC3 in 2021 after his team handed him too many tyres on Rally Monza. His progress in WRC2 will be well worth watching.

A limited WRC3 programme for Ireland's Josh McErlean reaped big rewards, amassing 46 points from just four starts, crowned with a podium finish in third place on the asphalt of Spain. As an Irishman, Tarmac roads are as ingrained in him as gravel pace is to a Finn but the youngster continues to hone his skills and show impressive pace on the loose, which helped him stay in the top 10 of WRC3 points to the end of the season.

One-off WRC3 outings in the class for Neil Simpson and Seb Perez in Spain both resulted in strong top-10 results, while Tom Williams also achieved the feat on the season opener in Monte Carlo before heading to the US for the bulk of his season. MN Circuit Rally round winner Frank Bird also made his debut in Monza – fittingly for a GT racer, perhaps – and showed good pace despite retiring.

In the Junior WRC, Ulsterman Jon Armstrong lined up with Irish Academy driver – and MN National Rally Driver of the Year – William Creighton. Both youngsters shone, although for Armstrong the year ended in heartbreak after going out of the title decider. Such disappointments tend to only stiffen resolve for the future, however, while Creighton can build on his British junior class title.

McErlean tackled three WRC3 rounds

RALLY FINLAND

When: October 1-3

1 Elfyn Evans (Toyota)

2 Ott Tanak (Hyundai)

3 Craig Breen (Hyundai)

While the trip to Jyvaskyla in the autumn created uncertainty for some, there was no doubting Elfyn Evans' speed on the roller coaster roads of central Finland. A blistering quartet of stage wins on Saturday morning and a mighty triumph in the dark on SS14 put the Welshman on the path to glory as the first UK winner since Kris Meeke in 2016. Ott Tanak and Craig Breen also shone in second and third.

RALLY SPAIN

When: October 14-17

1 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai)

2 Elfyn Evans (Toyota)

3 Dani Sordo (Hyundai)

Elfyn Evans got his bid for victory on the Costa Daurada off to a flier by going 5.1s fastest on SS1 and leading by 7.6s after SS4. A big moment on SS5 handed the lead to Hyundai's Thierry Neuville and he remained out in front thereafter as Evans beat Dani Sordo to second with Sebastien Ogier fourth. ERC regular Nil Solans was eighth on his debut in a World Rally Car. Andreas Mikkelsen became the WRC2 champion.

RALLY MONZA

When: November 18-21

1 Sebastien Ogier (Toyota)

2 Elfyn Evans (Toyota)

3 Dani Sordo (Hyundai)

Needing to win to stand any chance of the World crown, Evans overtook Sebsatien Ogier for the lead on Friday afternoon, dropped to second on Saturday morning's first stage before leading and then losing for the remainder of day two as first place changed hands five times. The title-chasing Toyota team-mates were never more than 7.6s apart but an Elfyn Evans lock-up on the penultimate test ensured Ogier became champion.

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WRC REVIEW

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com. Toyota Gazoo Racing

THE LEADING PLAYERS ON THE BIGGEST STAGE

Graham Lister casts his eye over the outstanding talents of 2021

Sebastien Ogier was Motorsport News's World Rally Championship man of the moment after a measured eighth title before he goes part time in 2022.

The fight in his wheeltracks was much closer as numerous talents battled to halt the Frenchman's path to yet another crown. Here's how his rivals stacked up in our top 10 list of 2021. But if you don't agree with who we put where, let us know at motorsportnews.ed@kelsey.co.uk.

1 SEBASTIEN OGIER (FRA)

Co-driver: Julien Ingrassia (FRA) **Car:** Toyota Yaris WRC **Wins:** 5 **Other podiums:** 2 **Stage wins:** 43 **Championship position:** 1st, 230 points

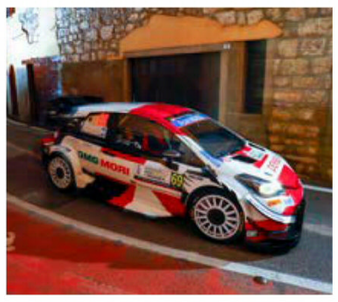
The Frenchman's final season as a WRC full timer ended as it began with a standout victory. His debut Mexico triumph in 2008, albeit in JWRC, put him on the path to greatness and there was plenty of greatness shown in 2021. Ogier won when he could (on the Monte), triumphed when a lesser driver would not (winning from first on the road in Sardinia and Kenya) and was measured when he needed to be, such as in Finland. He didn't need to win in Monza but there was no slowing him down once in the thick of the fight.

2 CRAIG BREEN (IRL)

Co-driver: Paul Nagle (IRL) **Car:** Hyundai i20 Coupe **WRC Wins:** 0 Other **podiums:** 3 **Stage wins:** 8 **Championship position:** 8th, 76 points

Ireland's finest might have moaned and groaned his way through his ERC campaign as a development driver for MRF Tyres, but he came alive in the WRC, notching up two seconds and a third from five starts in Hyundai's third i20. He won a stage and led in Estonia and was the only driver capable of taking the fight to home hero Thierry Neuville in Ypres, where he also topped the order before alleged team politics took hold. Finland was a fight for supremacy between he, Ott Tanak and Elfyn Evans, who were just a little more fantastic than Breen.

3 KALLE ROVANPERA (FIN)



Co-driver: Jonne Halttunen (FIN) Car: Toyota Yaris WRC **Wins:** 2 **Other podiums:** 2 **Stage wins:** 22 **Championship position:** 4th, 142 points

Rovanpera topped the title table after two rounds with 39 points but then managed 17 in the next three rounds during a tough run. Of those 17, 12 came in Kenya, where he led before getting stuck. He then made history as the sport's youngest winner with a fine victory in Estonia and repeated the feat in Greece – three weeks before his 21st birthday – either side of a podium in Ypres. Expectations for a third win in Finland were too great and he faltered by going off the road. But his limited experience should never be forgotten. A megastar awaits...

4 ELFYN EVANS (GBR)

Co-driver: Scott Martin (GBR) **Car:** Toyota Yaris **WRC Wins:** 2 **Other podiums:** 5 **Stage wins:** 37 **Championship position:** 2nd, 207 points

Having lost the 2020 title to Ogier when he crashed on the Monza finale, Welshman Evans began 2021 in similar fashion by suffering defeat to his Toyota team-mate on the Monte. He was a perfect right-hand man and 0.6s short of victory in Croatia but was in the right place to pounce in Portugal when Ott Tanak's suspension broke on leg two's penultimate stage.

A rare mistake in Kenya in late June set him back and it wasn't until Finland in early October that Evans hit top form again with a tremendous win. He was also sublime in Spain and Monza.

5 THIERRY NEUVILLE (BEL)

Co-driver: Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL) **Car:** Hyundai i20 Coupe **WRC Wins:** 2 **Other podiums:** 5 **Stage wins:** 45 **Championship position:** 3rd, 176 points

A model of consistency on the opening two rounds, despite having to make a last-minute co-driver change, Neuville should have won in Croatia but was badly let down by Hyundai's decision to fit a combination of soft and hard covers on his i20 when the rest of the world opted for hard tyres all round. He was leading by almost one minute in Kenya when his suspension failed on the final morning, but the Belgian enjoyed late-season cheer with a home win in Ypres, a 15th career victory in Spain and the most Powerstage points of anyone in 2021.

6 OTT TANAK (EST)

Co-driver: Martin Jarveoja (EST) **Car:** Hyundai i20 Coupe **WRC Wins:** 1 **Other podiums:** 3 **Stage wins:** 49 **Championship position:** 5th, 128 points

Tanak hit back from his double puncture-enforced Monte exit with a scintillating victory on the Lapland snow in February. Suspension failure put him out of rally-winning positions in Portugal and Sardinia before a puncture followed by an off cancelled out a shot at a home win in Estonia. He learned of his father's passing shortly after finishing second on the Acropolis but showed great character to outpace Hyundai team-mate Breen for the Finland runner-up spot behind Evans. After crashing in Spain, he called time on his season and elected to skip Rally Monza for personal reasons. He ended up fifth in the title table.

7 TAKAMOTO KATSUTA (JPN)

Co-driver: Dan Barritt (GBR), Keaton Williams (GBR), Aaron Johnston (IRL) **Car:** Toyota Yaris **WRC Wins:** 0 **Other podiums:** 1 **Stage wins:** 4 **Championship position:** 7th, 78 points

Katsuta, up to and including SS4 of Rally Estonia, was a revelation of 2021. Everything else that happened thereafter was pretty rubbish – except for Monza where the Japanese, 28, rediscovered his early handiness. He'd gone fastest on stage four in Estonia, but that rapid run left British co-driver Dan Barritt with back and neck injuries after a heavy landing and ruled him out for the rest of the season. Keaton Williams took over for Ypres but they crashed heavily before non-starting in Greece due to a Williams family emergency. Mistakes in Finland and Spain with Aaron Johnston co-driving hampered progress.

8 ADRIEN FOURMAUX (FRA)

Co-driver: Renaud Jamoul (BEL), Alexandre Coria (FRA) **Car:** Ford Fiesta **WRC Wins:** 0 **Other podiums:** 0 **Stage wins:** 1 **Championship position:** 10th, 42 points

Frenchman Fourmaux was brilliant in Croatia with a brace of top-two stage times and fifth overall on his top flight World Rally Car debut. He then took his first stage win in Kenya, where he emulated his Croatia score. The fact that he never hit those heights again was more down to the 26-year-old lacking experience and his Fiesta lacking pace and development time, although there were mistakes of course. However, all that was bad was cancelled out by all that was good from a driver packed with potential and who only began competing in 2017 after calling quits on his medical studies.

9 GUS GREENSMITH (GBR)

Co-driver: Elliott Edmondson (GBR), Chris Patterson (IRL), Stuart Loudon (GBR), Jonas Andersson (SWE) **Car:** Ford Fiesta **WRC Wins:** 0 **Other podiums:** 0 **Stage wins:** 0 **Championship position:** 9th, 64 points

Greensmith worked his socks off in 2021, leaving no stone unturned in his preparations and he made the most of new-for-Croatia co-driver Chris Patterson's experience to score a career-best fourth on the Safari. He also showed genuine progression and developed into a top-six regular on pace alone, ditching his paying-driver tag in the process. He was let down by a faltering Fiesta in Sardinia and Estonia but gets the chance to do it all again with a second full-season campaign in 2022, this time in M-Sport's Puma Rally1. Just a shame the retiring Patterson won't be around for the ride.

10 YOHAN ROSSEL (FRA)

Co-driver: Benoit Fulcrand (FRA), Alexandre Coria (FRA), Jacques-Julien Renucci (FRA) **Car:** Citroen C3 Rally2 **WRC3 wins:** 3 **Other WRC3 podiums:** 3 **WRC3 stage wins:** 36 WRC3 **Championship position:** 1st, 130 points

Not even two co-driver changes and an exclusion – and a failed appeal – from the Acropolis, where he appeared to have taken a battling class victory, could knock Rossel off his stride. He beat three-time European champion Kajetan Kajetanowicz to the WRC3 title by three points on the Monza finale. It was the culmination of a stellar campaign from the Sainteloc Racing-run Frenchman, who claimed class wins on the Monte, in Sardinia and Ypres – where he placed a fine seventh overall. These in addition to podiums in Croatia, Portugal and Monza Rossel proved he could win on gravel as well as asphalt.

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COLUMNIST

CHAZ SMALL

After slipstreaming Hamilton's early career, life took the rivals in very different directions

Photos: Motorsport Images, Jakob Ebrey

A handful of outings in Formula Ford did not provide Chaz Small with the opportunities he craved

It is great to watch all the success that Lewis Hamilton has achieved so far in his career and I think he is an awesome driver. Although my driving career never reached the pinnacle I had hoped it would – and certainly nowhere near his level – I can look at what Hamilton has done and am proud to say that I am one of the drivers who beat him. There aren't many people who can say that.

Of course, I wanted to be a Formula 1 World champion when I started out on my motor racing journey and anyone who tells you they don't want to be is either lying or shouldn't be doing it in the first place.

I raced against Lewis and beat him in the Champions of the Future Junior Yamaha title in karting in 1998 as we were both coming up through the ranks. A guy called Adrian Estasy won – I think he is a banker now – then it was me, even though we'd finished level on points. After me was Lewis and Paul di Resta.

My stepdad had got me my first kart for about £800. It was a struggle for us though – he and I were learning as we went along. We weren't blessed with pots of cash and we were learning a lot of what we knew by watching videos on YouTube.

I stepped up to car racing in the BRDC Formula Ford 1600 championship in 2001 which I won, and I was on my way. Or so I thought. I stepped into the Scholarship Class of Formula Ford and then Formula Renault, but I got ripped off by a couple of teams which put a serious dent in the very limited finances I had. The aim of climbing to the top of motorsport was just getting steeper and steeper.

I had a big chance when I was interviewed to join the British Racing Drivers' Club Rising Stars scheme in 2002. The club gave me the chance as I had won its Formula Ford series, and I knew it was a massive opportunity. This could have been the golden ticket for me as I had no real way to continue without backing.

Hamilton, who was a couple of years younger than me, was also being interviewed by the BRDC panel of David Brodie and Ian Flux on that same day – in fact, he went in front of the guys just 15 minutes before I had my opportunity.

I did well in the interview – even though I have never been so nervous in my life – but I simply didn't have the money to get to where I wanted to be particularly after being had over by that Formula Renault team. I joined another team and that disappeared halfway through the season when they went bust. I went to the track to race one weekend and they simply didn't turn up.

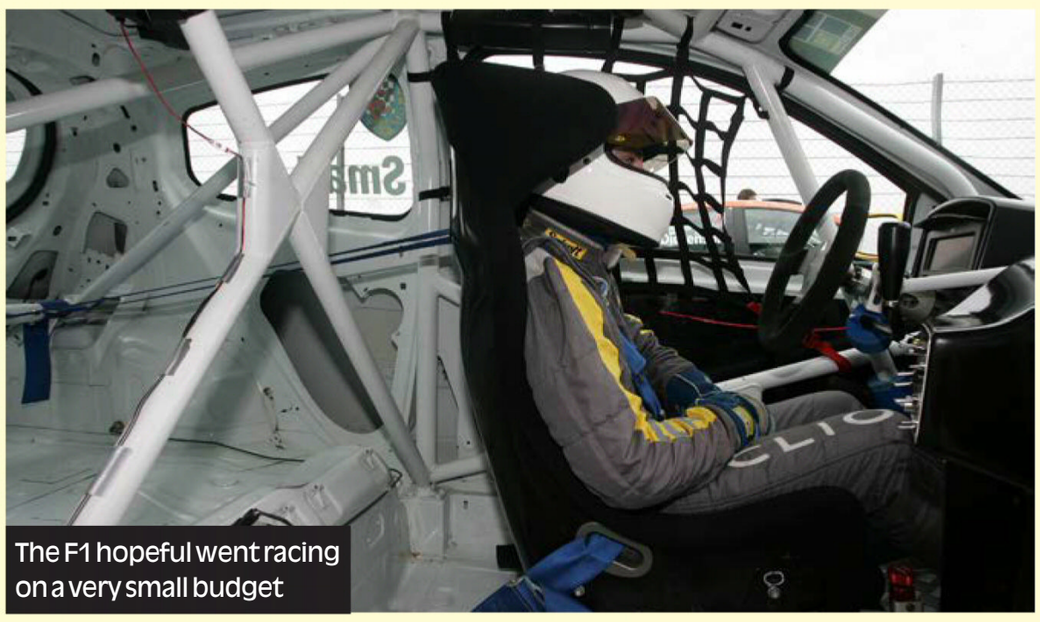
That BRDC interview was almost a sliding doors moment. There was Lewis, who already had his McLaren backing, and he got his chance on the BRDC Rising Stars scheme which just cemented his rise to the top. And then there was me, also on the scheme but struggling to raise enough cash to get back into the cockpit. Lewis finished third in Formula Renault in 2002 and went on to win it the year after. I did a handful of races in 2002 and finished 26th…

With no cash behind me there were no more chances for me, and that was it. I did a few Renault Clio Cup races in 2008: ironic really, because it was the same season that Lewis was powering to his first Formula 1 title.

I worked at Silverstone as an instructor and as Hamilton progressed up the ranks, even after he joined McLaren in F1 he would come over and see us and we would go for lunch together. As he got more and more successful, those meetings became fewer and fewer, which is a shame.

At first, I was always a bit frustrated when I was watching Lewis's success and I was thinking that it could – and should – have been me in that position. But then just look at what he has done amazing and great things. Then, on the other side of that, I think that if I had have made it to the big time, I wouldn't have met the woman I have met or have my child that I love so much.

Also, I have the advantage that I can pop down to my local Tesco and no-one bothers me for an autograph…



The F1 hopeful went racing on a very small budget

Lewis was in Formula 1; Small was in Renault Clios

"I joined a Formula Renault team that disappeared halfway through the year"

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE

YouTube offers an insight into Colin Chapman

Today is a poignant one in motor racing, as on this day in 1982 we lost Colin Chapman.

The towering Lotus kingpin as you'd expect gets plenty of YouTube coverage, and in a film therein titled 'Millionaire' we get a unique close look at the inimitable Chapman. Thanks to amazing intimate colour footage, we step into the very different world of late 1960s motorsport and motoring right in the face of the energetic great man and his cutting-edge Lotus organisation.

It focuses on the 1968 season, a traumatic one for Lotus with the loss of Mike Spence at Indianapolis as well as of Chapman's ultimate driving partner Jim Clark. Chapman talks in the film about what set his "best friend" Clark apart.

It was a season of change too, with Formula 1 cars sporting on-livery advertising and aerofoils – as you'd expect Chapman was somewhere near the forefront of both. There's a fascinating sequence of Graham Hill's Lotus pulling into the pit and having its front wing and sizeable rear wing bolted on in what seems seconds.

There's extensive fly-on-wall footage of Chapman operating at that year's French Grand Prix at scenic Rouen, as well as on-track footage of that year's famous German Grand Prix held in teeming rain. There are plenty of interviews with Chapman on a variety of subjects plus Hazel Chapman and Bob Dance also offer insights into Colin's unique character (look out for Clive Chapman on a trampoline too…)

You can find this at: youtube.com/watch?v=9xL64dMbabQ or you can search: '1968 Millionaire: Colin Chapman'.

Graham Keilloh

TV GUIDE

With the Formula 1 season now concluded Sky Sports F1 from tomorrow (Friday) is looking back on the thrilling campaign race-by-race with four of its races shown each day, starting at 1100hrs with each race broadcast in full then in the evening there are hour-long highlights programmes of the quartet.

Meanwhile today Sky Sports F1 shows last Sunday's title-concluding Abu Dhabi round again, with qualifying at 1200hrs-1345hrs, the race in full at 1415hrs-1630hrs and race highlights at 1700hrs-1800hrs, interspersed by Ted Kravitz's notebooks.

While if you miss today's season finale for F1's virtual equivalent, the Pro Series, Sky Sports F1 shows it again this evening at 2300hrs-0030hrs.

Sky Sports F1 also today has an hour-long review of 2021's IndyCar campaign shown at 1800hrs-1900hrs, and it's on again at 0030hrs-0130hrs early tomorrow.

Premier Sports 2 offers BriSCA action from Mildenhall at 1300hrs-1400hrs today. The same channel also on Sunday from 1300hrs has an hour's highlights in turn of the Phoenix season finales for NASCAR's Cup series, Xfinity series and Trucks, which are followed by another chance to catch Mildenhall's action at 1600hrs-1700hrs.

Premier Sports 2 also gives you two hours from the recent Bathurst 1000 at 1800hrs-2000hrs tomorrow (Friday).

BT Sport 2 also has Australian Supercars action with highlights early on Monday at 0330hrs-0530hrs.

ITV4 meanwhile has some motorsport for those setting their alarm on Sunday morning. Motorsport Mundial at 0625hrs-0700hrs promises Petit Le Mans, NHRA Finals and European Rally Championship action from Gran Canaria, and at 0730hrs-0830hrs there's Motorsport UK featuring Mini Challenge UK and Ginetta GT4 Supercup dicing from Croft.

Graham Keilloh

You can relive all of the fun from the recently finished F1 season

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Chris Collier was in the right place at the right time for this shot

David Harbey enjoyed Dukeries

Hybrid work, from Rich Cranston

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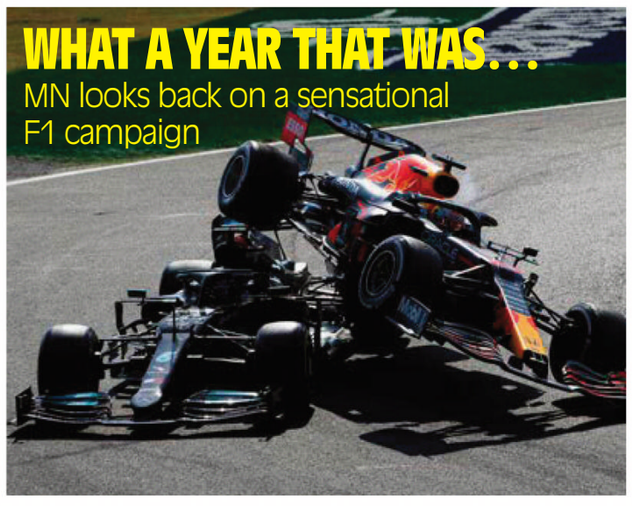

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Our favourite images from the cutting edge from the last 12 months

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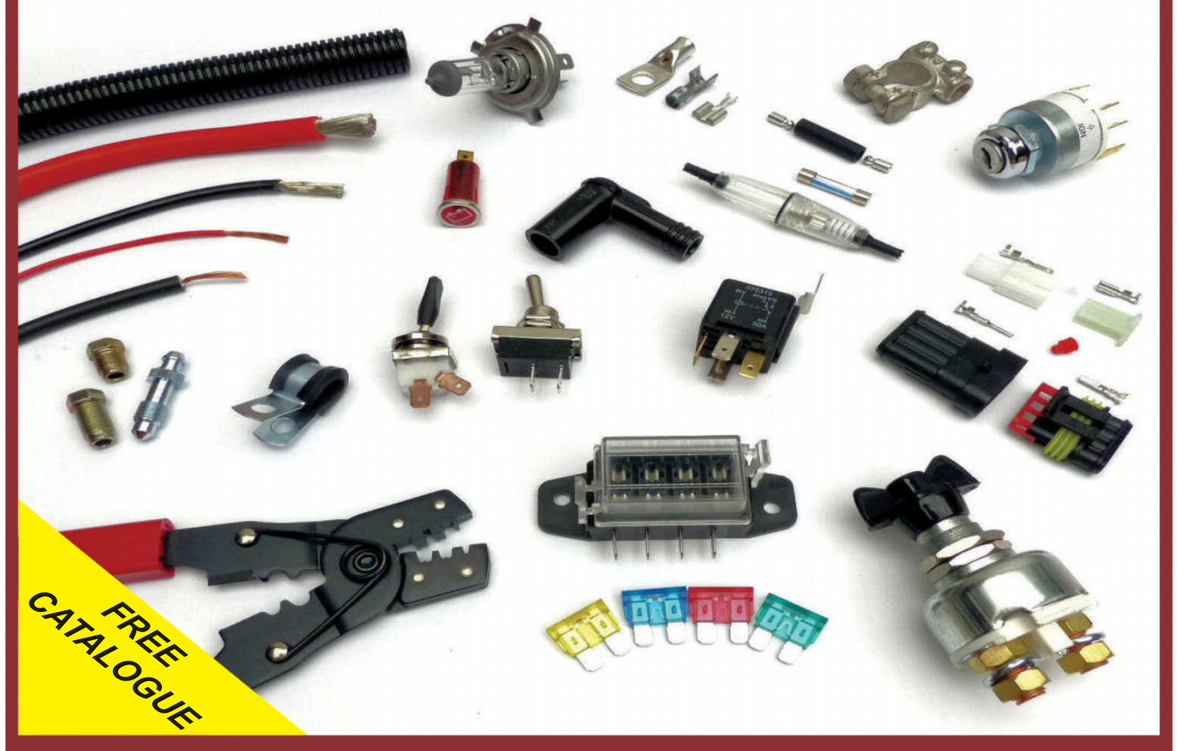

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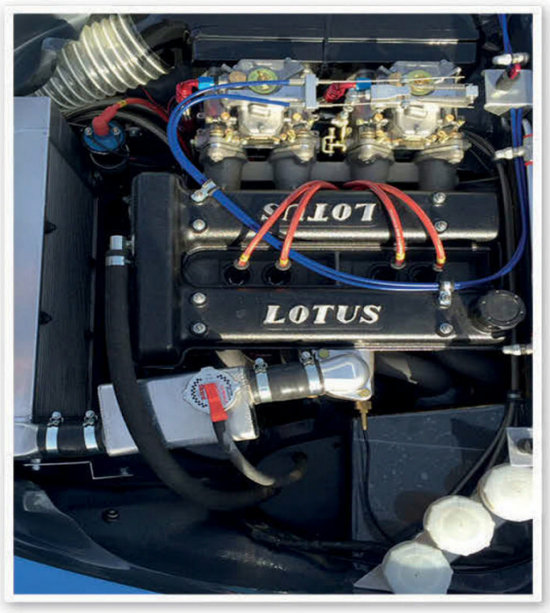

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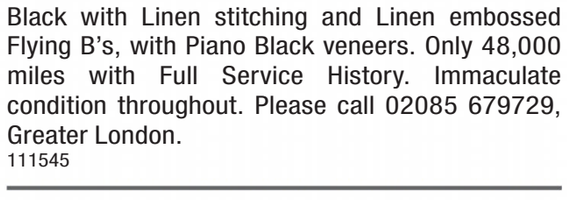

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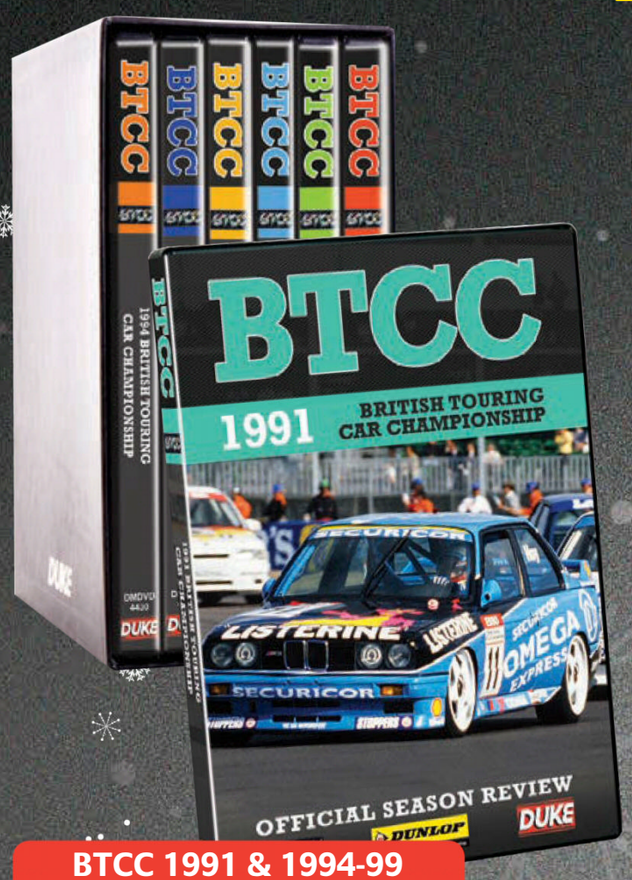

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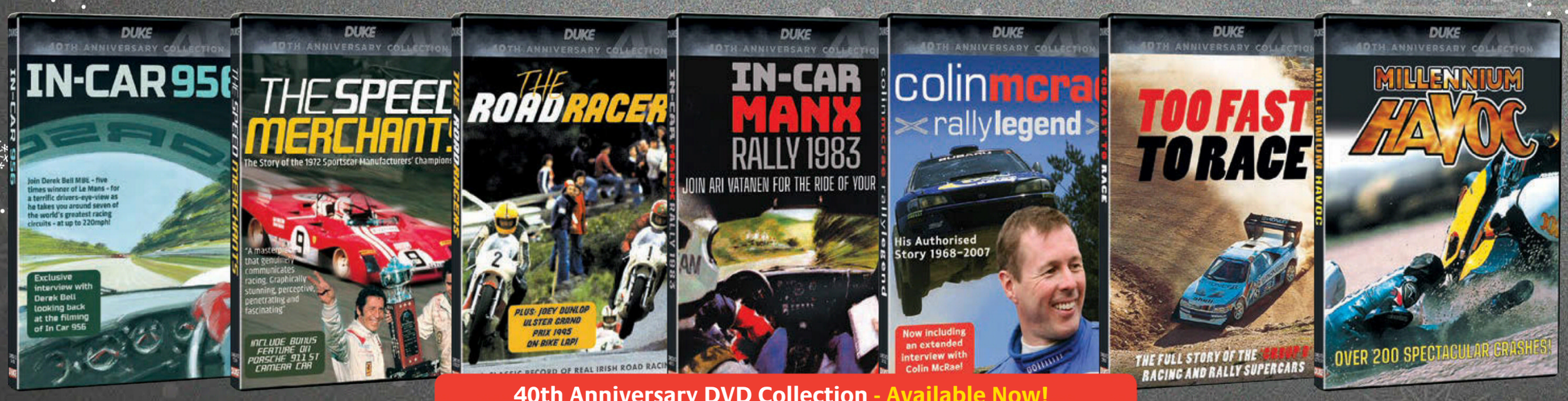

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